



Supporting Families

During Difficult Times

Families, often, look to their child care provider to give them relief in times of trouble. Whether it is advice they need, services or resources, check out the following pages that you can provide to parents and families as you see fit.

Topics include:

- **Managing Stress**
- **Bonding With Your Baby**
- **Parenting Your School-Age Child**
- **Dealing with Temper Tantrums**
- **Making Healthy Connections**
- **Building Resilience in Children**
- **Managing Your Finances**
- **Ten Ways to be a Better Dad**
- **Feeding Your Family**
- **Keeping Your Family Strong**
- **Connecting With Your Teenager**
- **Teen Parents... You're Not Alone**

Pinwheels for Prevention is another great resource for families with strategies to help children and families as well as a list of community resources and a description of what resources are provided. Check out Pinwheels for prevention here:

https://www.ounce.org/cap/family_Development_Guide.pdf

MANAGING STRESS

Everyone has stress, whether it is a bad day at work, car trouble, or simply too many things to do. However, too much stress can make it hard to parent effectively. After a while, your children may show signs of stress as well.



Signs You Are Stressed:

- **Feeling angry all the time**
- **Feeling hopeless & crying easily**
- **Trouble making decisions & worrying all the time**
- **Arguing with friends or your partner**
- **Overeating or not eating enough**
- **Unable to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time**

What You Can Do?

- **Identify what is making you stressed. Everyone's stressors are different.**
- **Accept what you can't change. Ask yourself, "Can I do anything about it?" If the answer is no, try to focus on something else.**
- **Have faith and look back on times when you had to overcome challenges.**
- **Relax and try deep breathing, meditation, yoga or listen to music.**
- **Take care of yourself by making sure you eat healthy and get enough sleep.**
- **Take time for yourself.**
- **Develop a support network.**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.**

REMEMBER: Learning to manage your stress will improve your happiness and show your children that they can handle stress, too!

BONDING WITH YOUR BABY

Attachment is a deep bond that develops between a caregiver and child during the baby's first few years of life. This attachment is crucial to the growth of a baby's body and mind. Babies who have this bond and feel loved have a better chance of growing up to be adults who trust others and know how to return affection.



Most Babies:

- **Have brief periods of sleep, crying or fussing many times each day**
- **Love to be held and cuddled**
- **Respond and imitate facial expressions**
- **Love soothing voices**
- **Grow and develop everyday**
- **Learn new skills quickly**

What You Can Do?

- **Respond when your baby cries by trying to understand what he or she is saying.**
- **Show your baby affection as often as possible.**
- **Use feeding, bathing and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile and talk to your baby.**
- **Read, sing and play peek-a-boo.**
- **If you feel you are having trouble bonding with your baby, don't wait to get help! Talk to your doctor as soon as you can.**

REMEMBER: The best gift you can give to your baby is YOU. The love and attention you provide will stay with him or her forever.

PARENTING YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD

Children, ages 6-12, go through big changes. As they spend more time at school and away from home, they are working to develop their own identity. They are learning to control their feelings, use reason, and solve problems.



Normal School-Age Children:

- Mature unevenly. Their bodies may be growing, but they can still have temper tantrums.
- See things in black and white. They are concerned about fairness and rules.
- Are capable of doing chores and homework on their own,
- Get distracted easily.

What You Can Do?

- Model the behavior you want them to follow.
- Make a few important rules and enforce them every time.
- Let your children know what you expect of them. Post rules.
- Support their growing bodies. Make sure they eat healthy (especially breakfast) and get enough sleep.
- Limit time spent watching TV, playing video games or using the computer.
- Be involved in your child's school. Talk to their teachers and be sure to attend parents' night and school conferences.
- Offer support when your child has problems with peers.
- Don't wait for your child to learn about sex, alcohol and drugs from others.

REMEMBER: Talk to your children, and listen to what they have to say. They may sometimes act like they don't care what you say, but they still want your love and attention.

DEALING WITH TEMPER TANTRUMS

Two and three-year-olds have many skills, but controlling their tempers is not one of them. Temper tantrums are common at this age because toddlers are becoming independent and developing their own wants, needs and ideas.



Most Toddlers:

- **Love to say “No!” and “Mine!”**
- **Test rules over and over.**
- **Are not yet ready to share.**
- **Need lots of fun activities, play times and opportunities to explore the world.**
- **Respond well to a routine for sleeping and eating.**

What You Can Do?

- **Direct your child’s attention to something else.**
- **Give your child a choice in matters.**
- **Stick to a daily routine that balances fun with enough rest and food.**
- **Praise your child when he or she shows self-control.**

If You Cannot Prevent the Tantrum:

- **Say what you expect from your child.**
- **Remain calm and remember, you are a role model for your child.**
- **Holding your child during a tantrum may help.**
- **Take your child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely.**
- **Some children just want attention. Try ignoring him or her and try not to overreact.**

REMEMBER: When your child is having a tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let his/her behavior cause you to lose control.

MAKING HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

Good health starts with eating the right foods and getting plenty of physical activity. A healthier lifestyle means less stress for your family, as well as more energy, less disease and lower health-care costs.



Eating Well:

- **Remember: children learn their future eating habits from watching you.**
- **Family meals are an important time to connect with your children.**
- **Allow children to decide how much to eat based on their hunger.**
- **Reward your children with attention and kind words instead of food.**
- **Plan, shop and cook more meals at home together.**
- **Let your kids invent their own healthy recipes.**
- **If you are having difficulty providing enough healthy food for your family, consider applying for food stamps or WIC benefits.**

Physical Activity:

- **Children need at least 60-minutes of physical activity each day.**
- **Find activities you enjoy and do them as a family.**
- **Support your children's participation in sports.**
- **Take a family walk after dinner instead of turning on the TV.**
- **Walk or bike with your child to and from school.**
- **Set family challenges, such as completing a "mud run" or a long hike together.**
- **Local community centers often offer free or low-cost activities.**

REMEMBER: Making a commitment to health together is more fun than doing it alone... and it can bring your family closer together.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

All youth face difficulties, which can range from traumatic losses to everyday disappointments. The ability to cope and recover (or “bounce back”) after a setback is important to their success.



What Can You Do?

- **Model a positive outlook.** Children will learn from your ability to bounce back from difficulties.
- **Build confidence.** Comment frequently on what your child does well. Point out when he or she demonstrates kindness, persistence and integrity.
- **Build connections.** Create a strong, loving family and encourage your child to make good friends.
- **Encourage goal-setting.** Teach your child to set realistic goals and work toward them one step at a time.
- **See challenges as opportunities.** Tough times are often when we learn the most. Resist the urge to solve your child’s problem for him or her—this can send a message that you don’t think he or she can handle it.
- **Teach self-care.** Many challenges are easier to face when we eat well and get enough rest and exercise.
- **Help others.** Empower your child by giving him or her opportunities to help out at home or do age-appropriate volunteer work for his/her school, neighborhood or place of worship.

Need More Information?

- Visit the American Academy of Pediatrics “Building Resilience”, or
- Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers, located on the website for the American Psychological Association.

REMEMBER: With your help and support, children can learn to be more resilient.

MANAGING YOUR FINANCES

If you feel like your finances are out of control, you are not alone! Many people worry about money. While common, a daily struggle to pay bills creates stress that can harm your family life and a child's well-being.



What Can You Do?

- **Know where your money goes.** Track your family's spending and create a realistic budget.
- **Get organized.** Know which bills need to be paid out of each paycheck and when. Be sure to review your finances often.
- **Spend only what you make.** Put away credit cards and use cash instead. This will ensure you buy only what you really need.
- **Get help to stretch your budget.** State and federal programs include the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, WIC, Early Learning Coalitions and others.
- **Get a bank account.** Check-cashing services and payday loans charge high fees. One program that helps people access free or low-cost checking is call "Bank On." Google it.
- **Start saving.** Even if you can only put \$10 or \$20 dollars a month into a savings account, do it. Individual development accounts (IDAs) also match your savings to help you reach a goal, such as buying a house.
- **Seek new employment opportunities.** Work readiness, vocational training, job placement and career counseling programs can help you find and qualify for new opportunities that may pay better and move you to greater financial security.

REMEMBER: It is possible to achieve financial stability, even after a setback. The steps you take today will help create a brighter future for your family.

TEN WAYS TO BE A BETTER DAD

Involved fathers can help children lead lives that are happier, healthier and more successful than children whose fathers are absent or uninvolved in their lives.

What Can You Do?

- **Respect your child's mother.** When children see their parents showing respect for one another, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.
- **Spend time with your children.** If you always seem too busy, your children will feel neglected no matter what you say.
- **Earn the right to be heard.** Begin talking with your kids when they are very young, and talk to them about all kinds of things. Listen to their ideas, problems and issues.
- **Discipline with love.** All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits.
- **Be a role model.** A girl with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect.
- **Be a teacher.** Teach your children about right and wrong.
- **Eat together as a family.** It creates a healthy family life.
- **Read to your children.** Installing a love for reading sets your child up for success.
- **Show affection.** Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted and loved by their family. Showing affection every day is the best way to let your children know that you love them.
- **Realize that a father's job is never done.** Even after children are grown and leave home, they will still look to their fathers for wisdom and advice. Fatherhood lasts a lifetime.



FEEDING YOUR FAMILY

About one in five households with children in the United States face food insecurity at some point during the year. This means that the family sometimes cannot afford enough healthy food to feed everyone well. Some or all members of the family may go hungry, skip meals, or eat nothing for an entire day (or longer).

A Lack of Food Affects Children's:

- **Bodies.** Children may get sick and go to the hospital more often.
- **Behavior.** A lack of healthy food at home can cause fighting, hyperactivity, and mood swings in school-age children. Older youth may feel depressed, anxious or suicidal.
- **Learning.** Children can have a hard time getting to school every day or making progress in reading and math.



What Can You Do?

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several programs to help families feed their children, including:
 - ◇ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps, helps low-income families pay for food.
 - ◇ The Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program provides short-term help for low-income families.
 - ◇ The National School Lunch and Breakfast programs offer children free or reduced-price meals at many schools. Apply at your child's school.
 - ◇ The Summer Food Service Program provides free, healthy meals to children and teenagers in low-income areas during the summer.

REMEMBER: There are resources in every community to help families provide healthy food for their children.

KEEPING YOUR FAMILY STRONG

Every family has strengths, and every family faces challenges. This is why it is so important for families to draw upon strengths and resources when life gets difficult. This tip sheet describes some key protective factors and some simple ways you can build these factors in your own family:



Nurturing and Attachment:

- Take time at the end of each day to connect with your children with a hug, smile or just a few minutes of talking and listening.
- Find ways to engage your children while completing everyday tasks (meals, shopping, driving in the car).

Knowledge and Parenting of Child Development:

- Explore parenting questions with your family doctor, your child's teacher, family or friends.
- Subscribe to a magazine, website or newsletter about child development.
- Take a parenting class, such as the Born Learning Classes offered by Early Learning Coalitions.
- Sit and observe what your child can and cannot do.
- Share what you learn with your child care provider.

Parental Resilience:

- Take quiet time to reenergize.
- Do some physical exercise: walk, stretch, do yoga, dance.
- Share your feelings with someone you trust.
- Surround yourself with people who support you and make you feel good about yourself.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR TEENAGER

Many teens, these days, spend less and less time with their families. As they become more independent, relationships with friends become more important. Sometimes, it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore, but teens still need their parents' love, support and guidance.



Normal Teens:

- **Crave independence**
- **Question rules and authority**
- **Test limits**
- **Make mature decisions at times, and childish ones at other times**

What Can You Do?

- **Have family meals. If it is impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night.**
- **Share "ordinary" times. Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teenager. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offers chances for your teen to talk about what is on his or her mind.**
- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved. Go to games and practices.**
- **Get to know your child's friends.**
- **Be interested. Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences.**
- **Set clear limits. Teenagers need guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences.**

REMEMBER: Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Show your teen how much you love them!

TEEN PARENTS... YOU'RE NOT ALONE



Parenting is a 24-hour-a-day job, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming. You may be juggling the demands of a baby, your family, school, and work.

Many Teen Parents Sometimes Feel:

- **Confused and uncertain**
- **Overwhelmed**
- **Angry**
- **Lonely and depressed**

What Can You Do?

- **Join a support group.** A group for young moms and dads could give you time with new friends who have lives similar to yours.
- **Find ways to reduce stress.** Take a break while someone reliable cares for your baby or take a walk with the baby in a stroller.
- **Become a regular at baby-friendly places,** such as story time at the local library.
- **Finish school.** Even though it may be difficult, finishing high school (or getting a GED) is one of the most important things you can do to help your baby and yourself.
- **Improve your parenting skills.** Don't be afraid to ask for advice from experienced parents. Classes, such as Born Learning Classes offered by Early Learning Coalitions, are a great resource.
- **Call a help line.** Most states have help lines for parents. Childhelp® runs a national 24-hour hotline (1-800-A-CHILD) for parents who need help or parenting advice.

REMEMBER: Stay in contact with friends and family who support you and make you feel good about yourself. Help is just a phone call away!