



A PARENTS GUIDE COPING WITH FAMILY STRESS

The information in this brochure is provided as an education resource for parents by Schneider Children's Hospital and Kohl's Cares for Kids. Additional information is available on our website:

www.schneiderchildrenshospital.org

Schneider Children's Hospital and Kohl's Cares for Kids



Working together to make a difference for the kids in our communities.

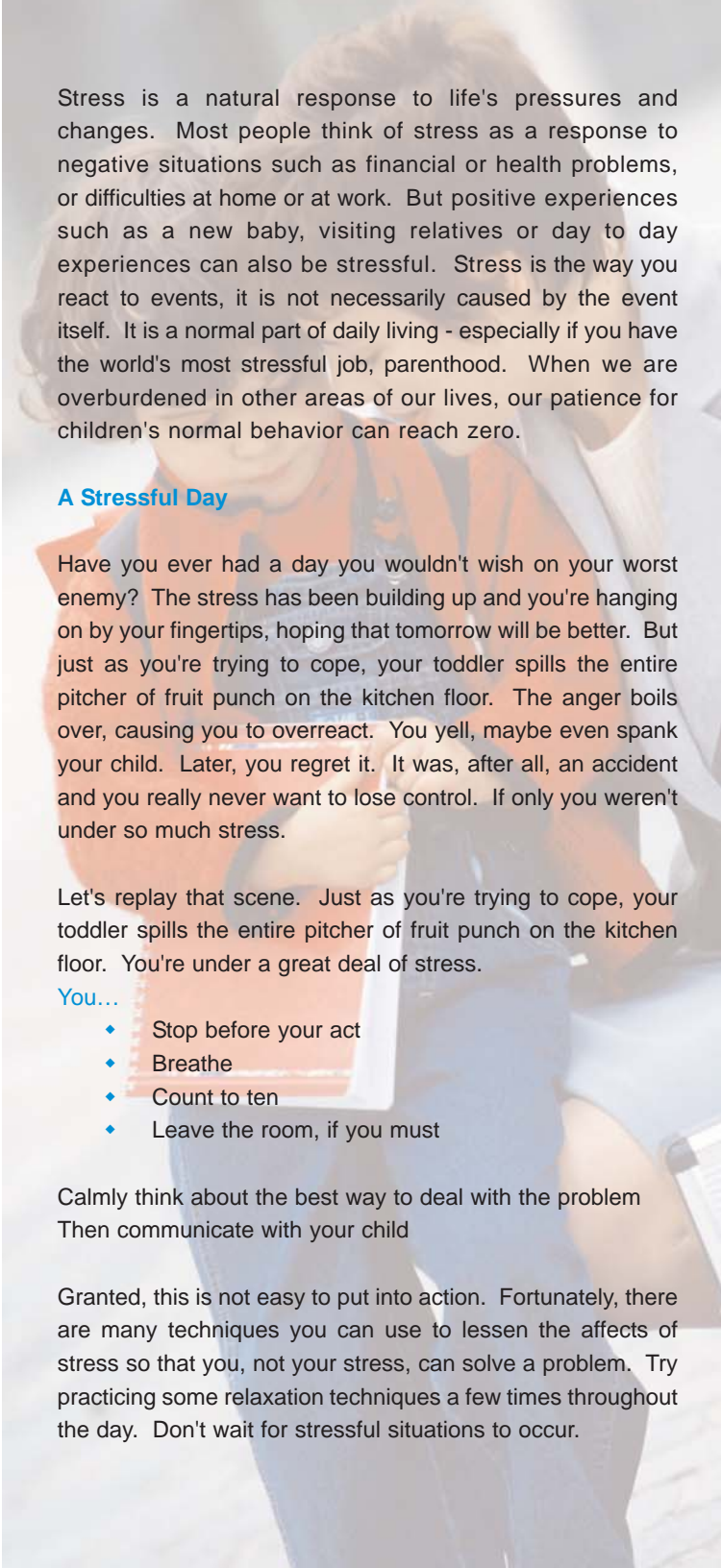


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Setting New Standards In Children's Healthcare
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Stress is a natural response to life's pressures and changes. Most people think of stress as a response to negative situations such as financial or health problems, or difficulties at home or at work. But positive experiences such as a new baby, visiting relatives or day to day experiences can also be stressful. Stress is the way you react to events, it is not necessarily caused by the event itself. It is a normal part of daily living - especially if you have the world's most stressful job, parenthood. When we are overburdened in other areas of our lives, our patience for children's normal behavior can reach zero.

A Stressful Day

Have you ever had a day you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy? The stress has been building up and you're hanging on by your fingertips, hoping that tomorrow will be better. But just as you're trying to cope, your toddler spills the entire pitcher of fruit punch on the kitchen floor. The anger boils over, causing you to overreact. You yell, maybe even spank your child. Later, you regret it. It was, after all, an accident and you really never want to lose control. If only you weren't under so much stress.

Let's replay that scene. Just as you're trying to cope, your toddler spills the entire pitcher of fruit punch on the kitchen floor. You're under a great deal of stress.

You...

- ◆ Stop before you act
- ◆ Breathe
- ◆ Count to ten
- ◆ Leave the room, if you must

Calmly think about the best way to deal with the problem
Then communicate with your child

Granted, this is not easy to put into action. Fortunately, there are many techniques you can use to lessen the affects of stress so that you, not your stress, can solve a problem. Try practicing some relaxation techniques a few times throughout the day. Don't wait for stressful situations to occur.

Stress Busters

Practice a relaxation technique like deep breathing. Breathe through your nose, slowly fill your lungs, then hold for a few seconds. Exhale slowly. Repeat a few times. If you have the time, also practice the "Counting to Ten" technique described below.

- ◆ Create a support system by sharing your problems with other parents, a relative, neighbor or spouse. Sometimes, simply discussing the situations that are causing stress can alleviate the stress.
- ◆ Schedule some time for yourself, even if it's only to go for a walk after dinner or to a movie - without the kids.
- ◆ Write down your thoughts in a diary.
- ◆ Think about positive things.
- ◆ Join a support group for parents or single parents.
- ◆ Take a brisk walk.
- ◆ Exercise for twenty minutes, three times a week.
- ◆ Don't resort to drugs or alcohol. They will only increase your problems.

Counting to Ten

Gentle reflection and vigorous exercise may lift your mood. So if you can't take a walk during the day, this simple stress buster may help: Find a quiet spot. Then, close your eyes. Take a long, slow breathe to the count of one. **Exhale** slowly and count to two. **Inhale** to the count of three. **Exhale** to four and so on. Count up to ten and start at one again. **Repeat** for five minutes. You can also try repeating a pleasant word or phrase in sync with your **breathing**. Rather than fight worries, let them float by, then refocus your breathing. This should rid your body of tension --- and help you **relax**.