

SUPPORTING PARENTS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING: STRESS REDUCTION TIPS

1. Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
2. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
3. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc.
4. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
5. Practice preventive maintenance: your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/ fall apart at the worst possible moment.
6. Be prepared to wait. A good book and activities for additional children can make an appointment easier to tolerate.
7. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today. Whatever you want to do today, do it now.
8. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get too low, keep a well-stocked emergency shelf or home staples, prepare for plan B.
9. Don't put up with something that doesn't work correctly. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoes laces, windshield wipers, or whatever is a constant source of aggravation, get it fixed or get a new one.
10. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive to the airport in plenty of time and expect delays.
11. Eliminate, restrict or reduce the amount of caffeine in your diet.
12. Set up contingency plans, "just in case". ("If for some reason either of us is delayed here's what we'll do". Or, "If we get split up in the shopping center, here's where we'll meet".
13. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
14. Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count them.
15. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours of time.
16. Say "No". Saying "no" to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax, replenish, and be alone.
17. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil). Or let calls go to voicemail.
18. Turn needs into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
19. Simplify, simplify, simplify....
20. Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worry warts.

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21. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.
22. Wear ear plugs. If you need to find quiet time at home, pop in some earplugs.
23. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock or alarm setting on your phone to remind you to go to bed.
24. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and work space so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.
25. Be mindful of not to take short, shallow breaths. Check your breathing throughout the day as well as before, during and after high pressure situations. Slow, deep breaths will relax your muscles and expand your chest.
26. Writing your thoughts and feelings down can help you clarify things and give you a renewed perspective.
27. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be.
28. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of actually getting the job done, diversion (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment) may be just what you need.
29. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend or family member can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.
30. Select an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job which requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics or religion, don't spend a lot of time with people who love to talk politics or religion.
31. Learn to live one day at a time. One hour, minute at a time if necessary.
32. Every day, do something you really enjoy.
33. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
34. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.
35. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
36. Schedule a realistic day. Avid the tendency to schedule back to back appointments. Allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
37. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise upon.
38. Use your weekend time for a change of pace.
39. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or anything else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything you have to do.
40. Allow yourself time every day for privacy, quiet, and introspection.
41. If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then, the rest of the day will be free of anxiety.
42. Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
43. Take a break during the day to regroup.
44. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.