

Put Your Oxygen Mask On First

*Simple Parenting Tools for
Complex Little Kids*

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How to Parent: 2021

Make sure your children's academic, emotional, psychological, mental, spiritual, nutritional and social needs are met while being careful not to over-stimulate, under-stimulate, improperly medicate, helicopter, or neglect them in an environment that is screen-free, processed foods-free, GMO-free, negative energy-free, plastic-free, body positive, socially conscious, egalitarian yet authoritative, nurturing yet fostering of independence, gentle yet not overly-permissive, in a pesticide-free, two story, multilingual home (preferably on a cul-de-sac with a back yard and 1.5 siblings spaced at least two years apart) to ensure optimum development.

And don't forget the coconut oil...

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How to Parent: in pretty much any
generation before ours

Feed them, sometimes.

Bunmi Laditan

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Agenda:

- I. There's stress, and then there's **STRESS**
- II. The etiology & the impact of stress in our lives
- III. Are we coping? Taking our emotional pulse
- IV. Managing stress manageably – setting reasonable expectations for ourselves
- V. Q & A

Where's all this stress coming from?

Outside the family:

- *Achievement bar set high in Fairfield County:*
 - * affluenza
 - * competitiveness
 - * “cornucopia kids”
 - * hurried child syndrome
- *Parenting as a spectator sport: raising our children is seen as the measure of our value as adults*

Where's all this stress coming from?

Outside the family:

- *Media barrage of gloom and doom*
- *Commercialization and the “quick fix” lure*
- *T.M.I.*
- *Others?*

Where's all this stress coming from?

Inside Our families:

- *variable developmental paths of our kids*
 - * pace of progress
 - * uneven progression
 - * sibling issues
 - * vulnerability
- *need to learn extraordinary parenting-skills repertoire on the fly*
- *need to balance relationships among siblings... and spouses**
- *need to be an advocate in school*

Where's all this stress coming from?

Inside Our families:

- *when we feel the need to be*
 - * social director
 - * time manager / schedule keeper
 - * neighborhood mediator
 - * MOMber driver
 - * therapist evaluator
 - * academics translator
 - * spirits-bolsterer for our kids

What can this stress look & feel like?

Outside the family:

- *Less socially engaged*
 - * time constraints
 - * feeling disconnected
 - * guilt
 - * feeling rejected
 - * shame
 - * feeling misunderstood
- *Less effective in the workplace*
- *Withdrawing from familiar activities*
- *Poor sleep & eating habits*
- *Lack of energy*

What can this stress look & feel like?

Inside the family:

- *hyper-reactive to kids' stress & struggles*
- *or*
- *disengaged & less responsive to kids' distress*
- *less resilient & flexible – longer rebound times*
- *more hostile*
- *more controlling*
- *more guilty & easily discouraged*

When it's Time for a Change...

Persistent feelings like...

- *resentment*
- *pessimistic*
- *simmering anger*
- *fear*
- *envy*
- *isolation*
- *“anxiety”*
- *irritability*
- *guilty*
- *tearful*
- *blame*
- *embarrassment*
- *“depression”*
- *others?*

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Self-Care is Essential, not Selfish!!!

Parents - in general and particularly those with special needs kids - are the Generals on the front line of their family's life march... and Generals need care & replenishment, too.

The goal is to move our attitudes and self-perception toward feeling more empowered, connected, competent, supported, secure, balanced and inspired.

Some thoughts about self-care options...

- ***Ration your exposure to negative thoughts and negative media... and toxic people. Be a "good news" junkie.***

* negativity breeds pessimism breeds stress breeds elevated cortisol levels. And we all know what elevated cortisol levels breed...

Some thoughts about self-care options... •

Maintain Healthy Relationships

- * find and *USE* the time to engage with loved ones
- * get involved with an understanding, available & responsive social network (like, ummm, SPED*NET Wilton perhaps???)

• ***Tend to Your Spirituality***

- * practice patience and forgiveness and kindness

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Some thoughts about self-care options...

- ***Allow for more time to get things done.***

- * we contribute to stress when we chronically underestimate time needed to complete tasks

- ***Look for practical sleep solutions, but try not to stress about lost hours and fatigue.***

- * **Exercise:** Be physically active during waking hours and keep a regular bedtime as much as possible

- * **Avoid:** Caffeine, screens & bright light, bedtime distractions (phones, spouses?)

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Some thoughts about self-care options...

- ***Listen and talk (and write?)***
 - * developing an effective affective vocabulary gives us greater agency with our feelings
 - * genuinely being there for others who may be in similar situations makes **US** feel empowered & connected
 - * keep a journal for clarification, rumination & ventilation
- ***Exercise, but Not Too Much***
 - * moderate exercise decreases cortisol

Some thoughts about self-care options...

- ***Have FUN!!***
 - * *MAKE* time to engage in activities (or inactivities!) that bring joy and peace and satisfaction. Laugh!!!
- ***Learn to recognize stressful thinking***
 - * learning about and tuning in to our stress triggers can cue us to adopt more adaptive behaviors
 - * practice Mindfulness (deep breathing, yoga, music, meditation, etc.)

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Mindful Stress Reduction: Theory vs. Practice



Some thoughts about self-care options...

- ***Eat more healthy, cortisol-reducing foods***
 - * hydrate
 - * more fruits
 - * green and black tea
 - * pre- and probiotics (yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi)
 - * and *MOST* importantly...

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Some thoughts about self-care options...

**MORE
DARK
CHOCOLATE!!!**

Thanks for tuning in today!

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