



PSYCH NOTES™

Courtesy of

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PARENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS

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If you are a parent with school-age kids, then you probably know the drill. Your clock gets you going very early in the morning on a school day. You then drag yourself out of bed and realize that, not only do you have to prepare yourself for the day, but you also have to manage the children, the dog, and maybe even the cat! You may have only had six hours of sleep and you may feel that you are on “auto pilot,” yet there is the need to start a new day.

As the morning progresses, so does your effort. You discover that your 5-year-old decided to make breakfast on his own but destroyed the kitchen in the process. You clean up the kitchen, help the children get ready for school, make breakfast, pack lunches, help them get dressed, double-check school bags . . . You continue to work diligently to get them to school or to the bus stop, all the way checking your watch. By the time they are in school, you must rush to work, the store or an appointment. You feel tired and stressed out.

Parents need to learn how to manage stress. The following suggestions may help you cope more effectively during the week.

- Clarify and prioritize morning tasks and do the most important ones first. This may help reduce uncertainty and increase your sense of empowerment.
- Eliminate negative self-talk (e.g., “My life is awful,” “My kids are horrible.”)
- Monitor your nutrition and eat regular meals.
- Try to have some contact with another adult daily. Even brief conversation with another parent at the library story hour or the dance class can be a refreshing break.
- Engage in some physical exercise routine.
- Get enough sleep.

- Multi-task. Involve the children whenever possible in your chores and errands.
- Practice good time management. Structure your day and plan for active times, regular meals, down times, and work times.
- Organization is essential to control stress. Keep a calendar for your daily schedules, plans, outings, and errands. If it helps, use a special notebook just for lists or ideas.
- With regard to household chores such as cleaning, set up a schedule and adhere to it. Breaking down tasks makes them more palatable and less likely to be postponed. For example, break down the house into zones and tackle one room or zone per day.
- Utilize meditation and/or relaxation techniques. For example, take a warm bath or listen to peaceful music after a long day.
- Allow your self time every day for privacy, quiet, and reflection.
- Become more flexible. Realize that things will never be “perfect”- including your significant other and your children.
- Finally, recognize that parenting is work. Kids have no “instruction booklets,” and raising them is a very real, demanding, and rewarding job complete with stresses like any other. As with any job, you’ll need some time off, so plan ways to meet your own needs for privacy or personal time. Recognize that you are in good company, and be proud of your career as a parent.

East End Psychological Services, P.C. (E.E.P.S.) offers help for issues associated with AD/HD, ODD, anxiety including traumatic stress, and depression experienced by people of all ages. Please feel free to contact Dr. Volpe, Clinical Director, at (631) 821-7214 for more information.