

PARENT Talk

10 Stress Busters

All families experience some form of conflict each day. Often times, it can produce stress and tension in family members. The source may be power struggles between parents and children, differences in family members' needs for intimacy, substance abuse, difficulty in communicating, or conflicting personalities. Realizing and understanding the cause of family stress will help in coping.

A power struggle between spouses is likely the cause of many other underlying problems. If parents are unable to resolve conflict, children may lose confidence in them and act out to compensate for the power they feel their parents lack. Adult power struggles can lead to many other symptoms, such as: money disputes, bickering, conflict about whose career comes first, sexual difficulties and infidelity.

Family members who can't communicate well increase their personal stress level as well as tension in the entire family. It's important for families to discuss their problems. Isolation by one family member can leave others feeling angry and rejected. Often, these feelings are misread, and the problem escalates.

Parents can help ease the amount of stress in the family by paying closer attention to each member. Try these steps to lessen stress in your family.

10 stress-busters

1. Show affection toward your children and spouse often. A smile or a gentle touch can let them know you care.
2. Build your children's self-esteem. Be sure to commend each child on achievements. Let your children know you are proud of them.
3. Give children some of your undivided attention every day. Let them tell you about their day. Children like to tell about the good things that happened, and they also need to talk about the bad things.
4. Talk about any changes or problems that are discussing kids' problems will assure good communication and make you a part of what is going on in their lives. It also gives you a chance

to express your concerns and find constructive ways to deal with changes or problems.

5. Use humor and empathy, not orders, anger or sarcasm when asking your children to do something. Less significant conflict can easily be resolved without the use of strong discipline. Deal with situations in a light manner.
6. Make time for you and your spouse to go out on dates. An outing for just you two can be relaxing and fun.
7. Provide a feeling of security for your children. Establish some daily routine. A regular schedule of meals and chores provides structure in home life.
8. Examine situations that cause family members stress. Try to change or avoid these situations. For instance, if long car trips are stressful for your family, devise games to play to keep each other occupied.
9. Exercise regularly or participate in sports. Physical exercise relieves stress as well as gives you something to do together as a family. Find an activity that all will enjoy.
10. Remember that your children have problems, too. Take time to listen and let them know you are always there to help.

If you need help...

Maintaining positive relations in a family is hard work. Try to resolve problems. When everyone works together, you may be able to ease family stress. If that doesn't work, seek outside help. Talk over your situation with your minister, a friend, or a counselor. If you need more advice, call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 where a counselor is always available. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. ©