



Maximize Love, Manage Stress

WHY?

Infants and toddlers thrive when their world seems loving, safe and predictable. When you express love and respond to their needs, you teach children that they can count on you.

Over time, showing and responding to love helps children learn to manage their feelings and behavior. As they grow, feeling secure in their relationships gives them the confidence they need to explore, learn and take on life's challenges.

Young children are affected by your emotions, both good and bad. So, it is important to find strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself benefits your child.

Tips for Toddlers (12-36 Months)

Respond to Them

Watch and respond to your toddler's words, feelings and behaviors when they are upset as well as when they are happy.

Cuddle Them

Regularly hug and cuddle your toddler to help them feel safe and loved. And remember that boys need just as much love as girls do.

Encourage Them

Toddlers get a lot of satisfaction and confidence as they master new tasks. Help your child try new things. Follow their lead when they seem interested in something. Be supportive and encouraging as they take chances. Reassure them as they try to figure things out.

Talk about Feelings

Teach your toddler to name their feelings. This will help them understand and express emotions. You can say things like, "It looks like you're scared because you fell. Falling can be scary! But now you're OK."

Involve Them

Find simple ways to involve your toddler in chores and other activities around the house. For example, they could help sort laundry and fold clothes. This makes them feel helpful and provides opportunities for learning.

Have a Routine

Have consistent times and ways of doing activities like feeding, bathing, reading and bedtime. Your child will have an easier time with activity transitions when they know what to expect. Another part of a routine is having rules that you use consistently.

Manage Household Stress

Stress is normal, but too much stress is bad for a brain that is still developing. Adults' stress can trickle down to children, so it is important to have strategies for coping when your life gets stressful. Talk to friends, family or your doctor about ways to deal with stress.

Plan to Avoid Stress

What situations tend to be stressful? Think about those situations ahead of time and plan how you can approve or avoid them. For example, try to avoid trips to the store right before your child's nap time.

Moment of Gratitude

Take a moment to think about a few things that make you grateful, big or small. Reflect and enjoy that feeling for a few minutes.

Go Easy on Yourself

Life can feel overwhelming and we all make mistakes. Focus on the big picture and be gentle with yourself when things don't go as planned. Ask for help. All parents need help.

Give a Heads Up

Think about transitions that are difficult for your child. As a transition approaches, let them know a few minutes ahead of time so they can finish what they are doing and prepare for the next thing.

Role Model

Your baby learns how to act by watching you. Model the behaviors you want to pass on to them, like being kind and generous or handling challenges calmly (just do your best).

Take Turns

Look for ways to practice taking turns. For example, practice taking turns adding blocks to a tower. Or, when cooking, take turns adding an ingredient to a bowl. "I took my turn. Now it's your turn."

Empathize

Build your child's awareness of other people and children by describing their feelings and what caused them. "She is sad because her Daddy left."

Act Out Emotions

With an older toddler, act out different emotions for your child to guess. Pretend you are happy, sad, excited or tired. Let them take a turn as the actor.

Praise Kindness

Talk to your child about ways to show kindness. Praise them when they do act with kindness or generosity. Be specific about what they did. "It was nice of you to share your favorite toy."

Guide Behavior

Testing limits is a natural part of learning. Help your child start to build self-control by using simple rules consistently. For a younger toddler, put "no" in front of the thing you do not want them to do and redirect them to a different activity. For older toddlers, give them a simple explanation of the rule and what they could do instead. Praise good behavior.