

Tips to Reduce Stress for the Family

1. Stop overscheduling your family. It may seem impossible, but your family will thank you for the time to decompress. Perhaps you are committed to a tournament all weekend and can't slow down. Could you have a picnic lunch in between games? Could you take turns exchanging five-minute back massages to recharge?

Another possibility is to schedule relaxing activities such as doing yoga together, spending the day at the beach, or sledding for the afternoon.

2. Get organized the night before. Have your children pick out their clothes and pack their school bags in the evening. This will allow for a calmer morning when time seems like it is on fast-forward.

3. Tell your children that it's OK to be imperfect. Our society is very performance driven, starting with grades and sports early on in life. We always want our children to strive to be their best but sometimes they fall short. It's important to prepare your kids to deal with mistakes.

4. Be a good role model. Children will look to their parents to determine how to react to situations. If you are anxious, your children will pick up on that and it will increase their own anxiety. So when you want to reduce your child's stress, you must first manage your own. You can demonstrate the power of positive thinking, as well as techniques to relax and manage stress. It may be as simple as practicing deep breathing exercises on the way to school before their big test.

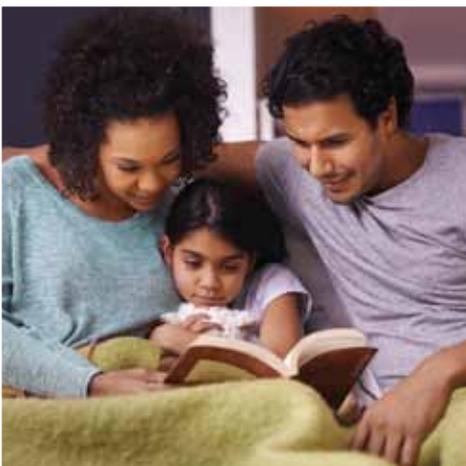
5. Listen to your child. It's easy to get overwhelmed by the to-do list for the day. Sometimes we need to stop, get at eye level, and be present in the moment when your child is trying to talk to you. Listening and sharing feelings are great ways to help kids feel supported by you, and that's especially important in times of stress.

6. Be patient. Easier said than done. It hurts to see your children unhappy or stressed, but resist the temptation to fix every problem for them. Teaching them to take a deep breath and think through the solutions will help them to grow into good problem solvers.

7. Just be there. Sometimes your kids may not be ready to talk about what's bothering them, and that's OK. You can suggest going for a walk together, dancing in the living room or shooting some hoops. Spending time together may help ease their minds.

8. Make sleep a priority. A good night's rest will give everyone the best chance for a better tomorrow. It helps to have a consistent routine of getting to bed at the same time every night. It is also helpful to transition away from stimulating activities such as watching TV or playing video games 30 minutes prior to bedtime.

Information derived from various sources including Psychology Today, Kidshealth.org and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Sleep Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Age	Hours
Newborns	16 - 18 hours a day
Preschool-aged children	11 - 12 hours a day
School-aged children	At least 10 hours a day
Teens	9 - 10 hours a day
Adults (including the elderly)	7 - 8 hours a day