



Parent Self Care: Decompressing

All parents have stress around a variety of everyday situations: exhaustion, fussy children, housework left undone, teen back talk, etc. When stressed, parents can become more sensitive to the usual noises and activities around the house, becoming less patient and more irritable. It's difficult to concentrate and you get stuck on negative thoughts. Recognizing that you're under stress is the first step. From there, you need to concentrate on decompressing.

RELAX

Breathe deeply. Relax all your muscles from head to toe. Pay attention to the muscles on your face -- around your brows, your chin and your jaw. A lot of tension can still linger on your face, even when the rest of your body is relaxed. If your teeth are clenched or grinding -- open your mouth slightly and loosen the jaw.

CHANGE NEGATIVE THINKING

Focus on something else or start a fun activity. Find a hobby, play games with the kids, work on a puzzle together, work in the garden, go bird watching, or take a leisurely walk.

Laughter can be a wonderful way to stop negative thinking. Watch a funny video or read a joke book. Just talking to the kids about happy things can be pretty comical too.

NURTURE YOUR SENSES

Sight: Sometimes, just being in orderly or soothing surroundings can help. Keep one of the rooms in your house as a sanctuary with nice pictures, soft lights and cushy pillows.

Sound: Soft music or natural sounds can be soothing -- or just no sound at all.

Smell: Have scents that can help you relax. Try various aromas and have the ones that you prefer available, like eucalyptus, lavender or rose.

Taste: Eat well-balanced, healthy meals. Give yourself a taste of something special, like chocolate. But use moderation -- too much sugar can be too much of a good thing.

Touch: Touching can be so healing. Be sure to get your daily dose of hugs, kisses, and caresses. Or take a nice, warm bath.

Remember -- it's hard to nurture others if you're not nurtured yourself.

By Thelma Dirkes © 2004 PTWC