

MANAGING STRESS: THE SINGLE PARENT

Newly single parents may have new and unfamiliar experiences. Frequently, the single parent is confronted with stressful changes involving moving, income adjustments, personal relationships, perhaps work and many other activities.



1 REDUCING OR LIMITING DISRUPTION

Ask yourself if some things you are doing now are essential. What tasks might be simplified? Decide which activities are most important for yourself and your children and accomplish them first. Try this! Instead of preparing meals every day, try meal prepping once or twice a week.

2 MANAGING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

What do you do well? Begin thinking about your strengths and abilities. Ask yourself about all the possible ways there are to improve your situation. What are the different ways that family, work, and childcare arrangements can be worked out? Communication is key! Ways must be found to listen and respond with family members effectively. If there is a specific concern careful listening, open communication of thoughts and feelings and shared decision making are the groundwork for healthy coping.

3 MAINTAINING HELPFUL CONNECTIONS

Identify your sources of help. In some cases, single-parent support groups may be sources of strength. Family and friends may be other sources of help. At times you may feel the need for professional advice. Don't be afraid to ask!

4 YOU CAN MANAGE STRESS

We all have strengths. Build on yours! Most important, maintain your ties to your children and others who can be helpful. When you are not feeling good about yourself or your family, remind yourself of these strengths. You may also think about how your family can add to this list. How can you build on your strengths? List some strengths of your family.

5 MANAGING WORK AND FAMILY

Demands at work and at home may interfere with one another. Is there more to do than time available? First, set priorities. What is less important? What will require more time? Every month review your priorities. Are you accomplishing goals? Think about what your children might do to help. Many single parents with older children involve them in household chores. Perhaps the house doesn't have to be dusted every day. Maybe you don't have to work an extra hour. This doesn't mean sacrificing your dreams; rather it means developing realistic expectations for yourself. Also, don't let a hectic day at work affect how you deal with your children.

***Tip: Practice forgetting about work on your drive home.**

6 BUILDING FAMILY BONDS

Stress can put a strain on family ties. Adults and children alike may want to make efforts to build a sense of unity- "we're all in this together" and will find a way to confront challenges. Spend time together in activities or routines that promote togetherness. Have a weekly movie night!

There are no easy ways to limit the stress caused by pressures from work and family. It is a matter of finding ways to eliminate conflicts, identify and achieve your most important goals and relish moments of satisfaction.

For further reading:

Managing Stress Turning Challenges into Blessings

<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/fcs650.pdf>

Arkansas Parenting Resources:

<https://www.uaex.edu/health-living/personal-family-well-being/parenting/>

