

All Parents of Preschoolers Need Support!*

Parents of young children often experience a great amount of stress, especially when their children misbehave. When parents feel stressed, children sometimes respond to this stress with more misbehavior. It is important to deal with the stress you feel as a parent so that you can help yourself and your child have a better relationship with each other and with others. One way to deal with stress is by getting support from other people.

Sometimes parents who are dealing with young children feel alone with their problems. They may think that other parents do not deal with similar problems and do not understand. They may think that others are not interested in such problems. Many times, parents feel too embarrassed to talk about the problems they have with their children because they feel that these problems reflect badly on their parenting abilities.

If you are having a hard time managing your child's behavior, or if you feel that you and your child are having problems getting along, you are not alone! Most parents have felt frustrated and unhappy with their children at different times, or felt like they aren't a good parent. Chances are, when you share your parenting experiences with others, they will understand and want to help. Talking with others about the difficulties of managing a young child helps to relieve stress because it provides you with needed support.

How to Get Support

There are several ways to get support from people you know and, sometimes, from other sources. A good and easy way to get support is by simply talking to your friends and other people you know. Just having someone to confide in will help give you a boost in your parenting efforts. You will also find that other parents experience similar feelings, and that you are not alone. Also, other parents may have some good ideas that could help you deal with certain family situations.

If you feel more comfortable keeping the problems you and your child are having within the family, talk with other adults in your family, such as your partner or your own parent.

There are some people who may be especially qualified to talk with you about your child's behavior. Always talk with your child's doctor about your child's behavior. Also consider talking to your child's teacher. Both of these professionals can offer you a different but important view on how your child is doing.

Accepting Feedback

Getting support from others means that parents have to be open to feedback. People with whom you share your experiences will probably give advice. It may be hard to take advice, especially if you think that the other person cannot truly understand what you are going through. Remember, their advice is meant to help you, and does not suggest blame or criticism of your parenting abilities. This is true even when the advice is about changing something you do as a parent rather than about changing something about your child. Be willing to listen to and consider the advice of others.

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Asking for Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Parenting is a challenging job. There may be several times when you feel overwhelmed and alone. It is especially at these times that you should ask for help. All parents need help, and asking for help does not mean that you are a bad parent. For example, you may ask your neighbor to watch your kids so you can run errands. You may ask your child's teacher to help you keep track of your child's behavior at school by keeping a checklist. You could also talk with the social services coordinator at your local Head Start center about other ways to ask for the kind of help that you need.

Taking a Break

Now that you know how to ask for help, use this to schedule breaks away from your child. All parents need time away from their child, and taking a break does not suggest that you are an uncaring parent. When parents take breaks from their child, they have more energy to deal with family situations, and they are likely to enjoy being with their child more.

Taking a break means spending time doing something that you enjoy doing without your child, while a relative, friend, or neighbor cares for your child. Examples include reading a book, watching a movie, exercising, going for a walk, and visiting a friend. Your break can last anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours, or even a weekend away. Try to take a break about once a week, or as regularly as you can manage them. You should especially give yourself a break if you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed with your parenting duties, or if you feel yourself getting very angry with your child. Remember, you work hard as a parent and you deserve a break!

What if That Is Not Enough?

Some parents have such a great amount of stress that it becomes hard to manage. If you try the suggestions above and still feel highly stressed, talk to your child's doctor, or your own doctor, about other options for help. The doctor may recommend parent training to help you learn special ways to manage your child's behavior. Or your doctor may recommend that you get therapy for yourself or with your partner to deal with some of the stresses that happen in families with young children. In the meantime, continue to follow the earlier suggestions. Everybody needs to talk about parenting - and to get a break from it!