



Taking Care of Emotions

It is important to balance the demands of parenting with personal enjoyment. Releasing emotions regularly—through talking, crying, or the activities below—helps prevent stressful emotions from becoming overwhelming, and consequently, becoming anger. When emotions are avoided or daily troubles are contained, parents can become emotionally numb and find action difficult. The years of child rearing go by quickly; taking care of your emotional health allows you to fully cherish the present moment and appreciate the joys of parenting.

Pick a strategy that you already use to maintain a sense of emotional well-being.

Mark one strategy you do well!

Creative Expression



Artistic expression can take many forms (e.g., painting, pottery, writing poetry or fiction, sculpting, crafting). Art provides the joy of creating and an outlet for the release of tension, fears, hopes, and dreams.

Physical Activity



Exercise (e.g., running, lifting weights, dancing, cycling) helps to release tension and increase endorphins, which are chemicals in the body that increase feelings of euphoria and strengthen the immune system.

Hobbies



Hobbies are regular activities that are done for pleasure, typically during one's leisure time (e.g., reading, gardening, sewing, traveling, putting together puzzles, and building models). Hobbies increase enjoyment, fulfillment, and joy. They also can engage the senses in escape.

Connections with Others



Time spent socializing with friends or family can increase enjoyment and decrease loneliness and isolation. In hard times, talking with caring individuals can allow feelings to be expressed and support to be offered.

 **Humor**

Giggles and guffaws increase your intake of oxygen, release endorphins, stimulate circulation, and relax muscles. As a result, laughter boosts one's mood and improves one's health! So, tickle your funny bone by reading comics, telling jokes, watching a comical show, joking with friends, or listening to a comedian!

 Journaling

Writing in a journal or diary or blogging can be a way to express emotions and process their meanings.

 Spirituality

A belief in a higher power is used by some as a moral compass, and it provides a sense of purpose and interrelatedness. Prayer and other forms of spiritual expression can provide solace in difficult times.

 Meditation

The practice of focusing one's attention allows for mental clarity, the release of stress, and greater self-awareness. Although not a replacement for traditional medical treatment, a growing body of scientific research suggests that meditation can increase physical health and help manage the symptoms of many diseases. There are a variety of types of meditation: guided, mantra, mindfulness, Qi gong, Tai chi, transcendental, and yoga.

 Visualization

Visualization involves generating an image or idea in the mind. It can be used to relax, embrace a positive image of one's self, or imagine an experience before acting on it. Visualization is sometimes used to ingrain a special place that provides a sense of warmth, safety, and peace.

 Time in Nature

Enjoying the beauty of nature (e.g., bird watching, hiking, camping, canoeing) can restore one's sense of connection to the larger world and provide an opportunity for reflection, appreciation, or gratitude.

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website <https://thrive.psu.edu>, and sign up today!