

Stress: Quick and Simple Ways To Get Relief For Caregivers and Infants

Outline

Welcome

Notice your state, energy of body and mind (calm, mind racing, judgmental, irritable, etc.). Now recall a time when your heart was overflowing with love, joy, gratitude (a “10”). Compare your “10” to now, and give your current state a number.

Who I Am

- Imperfect parent
- Bio – mind/body
- Current biggest challenges as a parent
 - Whining
 - Single parent
- Beginnings of a book and workshop

How old are your kids?

Key Points

- Responding with your heart
- Most effective ways to address stress
 - Reduce muscle tension
 - Change thoughts
 - Contact

Stress 101

- Reaction – Think of a parenting situation that really “gets to you”, then poll audience to find anyone they know who handles This situation without much stress
- Muscle Tension, esp. diaphragm and psoas
 - Body scan, brief relaxation (laughing TEE HEE or coughing)
 - Now I’ll pick someone . . .
 - Dunlap disease
- Must move – cortisol
- Contact Is One of the Best Antidotes – Central part of the tools we Will experiment with

Go Over Handouts

Reaction – read

Energetic Process – read + Dog Whisperer story

Contact With Self – read

Reaction – read

EX: Infant/Caregiver (to illustrate how much we react to others)

Energetic Process – read

EX: How many have had the experience of feeling like they are being watched, and then find out that they are? How many have a knee that is a foolproof barometer of a coming storm? How many have had a sixth sense that something is about to happen? How many have walked into a room of people and immediately sensed the heaviness of sadness among the people?

Contact – read

Your thoughts on this?

Primary Goal of This Workshop: Learn tools that can help you get back in contact with yourself when your energy has gotten out of balance.

Best Tool – Find ways to stay connected to your heart energy, which is the one of the best tools to help your stress and your baby's stress.

EX: A brief exercise to illustrate the power of heart energy

Body scan, brief relaxation using 4-7-8, body scan, recall difficult time in your life, body scan, “see” unconditionally loving entity, look into their eyes, hear them say, “I will walk beside you during this difficult time.”, “I will hold you until your fear releases.”, body scan.

No judgment or agenda or “I’ll fix it” attitude, just being very present with your heart and loving intention.

Do you know the book **Intention Is Everything** ?

The energy of a person who is very present and centered is palpable. This helps anyone reduce their stress level.

The three quickest routes to becoming calm when we are stressed are

1) address our thoughts (most of our stress reactions begin as a thought, this thought spawns a troubling emotion, and the emotions trigger chemicals to be secreted into our system that tighten our muscles). You could be snuggled in your bed, warm and cozy, and here comes a thought that sends us into a racing heart, tight jaw, . . .

2) feel contact with a very supportive person or entity

3) reduce our muscle tension

EX: Let's work with muscle tension and do an exercise that can help move this energy through our system. This exercise illustrates "grounding" that I spoke about earlier, and energy. **"Stream" exercise. Start with body scan.**

Go to last page of handout and go through it.

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Primary Concepts

Stress is a *reaction* to life that may at times seem automatic and beyond your control, but it can be controlled. It says everything about how you are taking in the event. If we can “respond” to events in ways that are non-judgmental, non-attached, and non-reactive, we can create a healthier environment for ourselves and our kids.

Your relationship with your child is an *energetic process*. Your energy affects him, and his energy affects you. The words and bodily expressions are a part of this energy, but the kind of energy we have at any given moment will be picked up by young children without any outward expression on your part.

Contact with self may be the most valuable gift that you can give your child. When you are in contact with yourself (have significant awareness of your body sensations and your thoughts), you are more likely to respond to your child in healthy ways.

Reaction. Stress says a lot about us. Situations do not have stress in them – they are just situations. Think of a situation that comes up with some frequency as a parent that really “gets to you” (for example, the kids start getting whiny, your child bites you or a sibling, your child cries non-stop for an hour). Chances are you know someone who you have observed in the same circumstance with their child (or yours), or has told you their experience, and it doesn’t “get to them”. The situation does not have to generate stress in us when we learn how to change our “reaction” into a “response”.

Energetic Process. Your goal is to create a safe and nurturing environment for your child. Your child is constantly looking for signs from your face and body that indicate she can relax and be herself. When you are calm and relaxed, your child feels secure, knowing that the person in charge is ready for any challenge. When you display inner turmoil, she begins to feel anxious and afraid, she abandons her own inner rhythm and starts “reacting” to you.

We all have adult situations that illustrate this. Think of a boss or spouse or anyone who is a significant part of your life. You are frequently taking note of what their energy is like because they are such an influential part of your life. If the boss is in “one of those moods”, you feel tension in your body, and your thoughts start spinning about things that you have done that maybe have caused this mood. You start thinking about things that might “set him off” more if he notices them (maybe he has a pet peeve about messy desks, so you drop what you were doing and start cleaning it). When his mood shifts to a smoother energy, you are no longer so much “on guard”.

Contact With Self. Why is “contact with self” so important as a parent? It is summed up beautifully in a short quote by Anne Morrow Lindbergh:

“When one is out of touch with oneself, one cannot touch others.”

So, what is “contact with self”? Let’s start with defining what being “out of contact” is. The most extreme is “dissociation” where we usually have little or no sense of our bodies. This can be so extreme that we do not feel hot or cold objects against our skin, a numbness, which is relatively rare. The most common way we are “out of contact” is by unconsciously “pulling our energy up” into our upper body and becoming “ungrounded”. This concept of being ungrounded is not widely spoken about, yet is common to us all. We are very ungrounded when we can’t think straight, feel anxious and tense, breathing is constricted, we feel overwhelmed, have a melt-down emotionally, and feel hopeless. The best way to understand this concept and how to become grounded is to experience it, which we will be doing shortly.

“Contact with self” is when our breathing is full, our mind is relatively calm (space between our thoughts), and we feel empowered. (not experiencing much frustration, and believing that we can find a resolution to whatever challenging circumstance we are in). We may have very strong negative feelings, but these do not overtake us and generate negative actions

Simple Stress Relief Tools for Caregivers and Infants

There are three main things that very effective to reduce stress quickly. They are releasing muscle tension, changing your thoughts, and making contact with those who love you deeply.

Releasing Muscle Tension

Cough or Laugh (to release diaphragm tension)
Wall Sit
4-7-8 Breathing
Walk stairs until legs are exhausted
Aligned stance, then alternate putting weight into each leg with a progressively wider stance

Changing Thoughts

Remind yourself: “This is temporary”
Ask yourself: “Where is my heart?”
Whatever issues or thoughts are stressful, ask yourself if you have any control over them. If not, remind yourself that you are stressing over something that you can do nothing about.
Read something inspirational.
Repeat your “mission statement” to yourself.

Contact

Call a friend who cares deeply about you, and even if you get their answering machine, say, “I just want to feel your love right now.”
Meditate on a picture of a person who gives you, or did give while they were living, something approaching unconditional love.
Let in the love from your higher power.
If you have struggles with receiving love (feel unworthy, etc.), write affirmations stating your desire to learn how to receive unconditional love.

Resources

“The Happiest Baby On The Block” DVD by Harvey Karp, M.D.
A miracle method for calming a crying baby.