

Navigating Family Stress



1. Stress Reduction Strategies

- **Muscle relaxation** – Tighten all your muscles and then release them group by group starting with your forehead down to your toes.
- **Hugs** – releases oxytocin which lowers levels of stress, it reduces stress hormones and produces a sense of relaxation.
- **Essential oils** – scents can help to calm and soothe (lavender, rose and chamomile)
- **Creativity** – tapping into your creative side has great benefits to the brain and an incredible outlet to process and express emotions.
- **Time for Leisure** - make time for the things that refresh you or give you life.
- **5 senses** – Grounding to help stop the loop of anxiety. (5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you taste)

2. Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids

- **Jesus blanket** - Have your kids use their imagination as they meet with Jesus. Once they find a place to meet with Jesus, have them imagine that Jesus is there with a white blanket and He is asking them to place all the things they are worried about on the blanket for Him to take away. You can ask your kids to ask Jesus if there is anything He would like to give them in exchange for their fears or worries.

2. Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids (cont'd)

- **Breathing techniques** – The key to a good deep breath is to have their belly move, not their chest. Have them put one hand on their belly and one hand on their chest. When they breathe in, their stomach should be moving out. And when they breathe out, their stomach should move in. Make it more fun like blowing bubbles, or on a pinwheel, or laying down with a stuffy on their belly.
- **Favourite place** – Have your kids imagine their favourite place to be. Invite them use their senses to think about this place – what do they see, hear, feel? Encourage them to stay there for a few minutes.
- **Pick a number and count down from there** – Sometimes it's helpful to focus on something simple, like counting. Have them pick a number and count to it. Or they could start with a random number, like 27, and count backwards down to one. Or they could start at 100 and count backwards down by 5's. Try a few different ways of counting to see which works best.
- **Senses and grounding** (5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you taste).
- **Find good distractions** – Laugh/jokes, play a game or help others.
- **Model good coping strategies** – We are our children's first teachers, as parents. They watch us and see what we do when we're feeling stressed. We need to model good, healthy coping strategies too. What are your go-to coping strategies? – Do you like to go for a run? or take a rest? Perhaps a crossword puzzle or an creative outlet?

The next time you use a coping skill, share that information with your child. Say it out loud. "I'm so stressed right now, and I just need a quick break. I'm going to sit in the sun for 10 minutes."

3. Increase the Fun and Joy!

- a. Family Night
- b. Taste Test – Pizza, burgers, chips
- c. Secret Santa
- d. Fun Jar
- e. Family Dinner – themes, or take turns cooking
- f. Drive Through Crawl - Go to one place for appetizers another place for your main course and different place for dessert.