

Remember: Kids Are People, Too



Don't think for one minute that kids lead stress-free lives. Carefree as childhood may seem to adults, children experience stresses that are as real to them as car payments and broken water heaters are to you.

Coach your children in stress management so they can learn to handle setbacks and disappointments. Here's how:

- Find a calm, quiet time to discuss with your children what it feels like to be stressed. Choose simple examples that are appropriate to their age levels.
- Ask your children about any physical signs of stress they may be experiencing, like upset stomach or sweaty palms.
- Teach your children that they can calm down, and show them how to make themselves feel better.
- Tell your children to take a slow, deep breath and imagine that they are sucking in air down to their feet. Then tell them to exhale all the "stressed" air out of their bodies and let go of tense feelings.
- Tell your children to imagine a comforting mental image. Suggest they picture themselves somewhere associated with relaxation—safe in bed, at a favorite playground, on the sofa with the family pet, sitting in Dad's lap, or something similar. Encourage them to include as many details as possible in this image, to make it clear and memorable.
- Encourage your children to practice deep breathing or conjure up a comforting mental image whenever they feel stressed.