PARENTS & STRESS

Being a parent is the most demanding job in the world... yet most of us train "on the job". When things are going well, savor the moment. Give your child hugs and plenty of praise. Be generous with pats on the back for yourself and the other adults in your life.

Sometimes things will not go well. You may feel stressed, angry and overwhelmed. The way you deal with these times is important. Even young children can be helped to understand how you're feeling if you tell them. Tension relievers can help. Try some of these:

1. Tell your child you need a break.

2. Count to ten. Go to another room for a few minutes. If your child is an infant or toddler, put him in a safe place first.

3. Go into another room, close the door and let it out - cry or scream. For ten minutes, do whatever relaxes you best.

4. Lie on the couch, put your feet up, and place a cool cloth on your eyes and forehead. Take a couple of deep breaths and think of a peaceful scene. Lie there for at least five minutes.

5. Call someone who cares about you and understands what you're going through. Tell what's bothering you and get the support you need.

6. If your children take naps, use that quiet time to pamper yourself. Take a long hot shower or a bubble bath, read a book or listen to soothing music with your eyes closed.

7. Change your daily routine. Take a walk, visit a friend, watch a special program on television.

8. Do something physical. Physical activity is good for you and your children. It lets off steam, and it's free.

These tension relievers aren't enough for many people. They work hard to control their emotions, but sometimes they feel they can't stand the frustration any longer. This doesn't make them bad parents. The fact that they ask for help is a sign of good sense. If you can answer "Yes" to any of these questions, you too may benefit from some help from outside of your family:

Do you feel as though you take your frustrations out on your kids?
Do you feel out of control more than you like?
Do you feel overwhelmed and see no way out?
Do you strike out either physically or verbally when you're angry at your children?
Do you feel as if your children misbehave on purpose?
Are you frustrated because your children don't listen to you?
Do you feel as though you pick on one particular child?
Do you feel that your children rarely do what you expect of them?
Do you feel as though you can't talk to your kids?

It's not always easy to reach out for help, but when you do you'll find many caring people who want to hear from you, people who will listen and provide assistance. When you need help being the best parent you can be, call the Parent Helpline at 1-800-FLA-LOVE. The call is free and confidential.

Parent Helpline is sponsored by the Parent Network of Florida, to strengthen families through education and support.