



Taking care of self, setting limits important in parenting

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Do you sometimes feel as if being a parent is your second job? If so, you are not alone.

A study on stress revealed that working parents commonly felt that after leaving their paying jobs, they were simply going into their second-shift jobs — being parents. This study went on to note that among two-career couples a major complaint was that they had too little time for each other and their children.

For single parents, the stress is even greater. A National Parent Teacher Association survey found that women who work full-time account for 80 percent of single-parent households.

Being a parent is probably the hardest job any of us ever will face. It continues 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year after year.

And as your family grows, the pace of day-to-day routine picks up and then never lets up. It is like meeting yourself coming and going with only rare occasions when you can take a break.

The following are some ways to decrease your stress and increase the joys of parenting:

- Have grandparents or a baby sitter help out. A respite from the demands of being a parent can help get you recharged and once again feeling up to the task.
- Let your child learn by trial and error. If it is hot outside but your child is insisting on wearing cold-weather clothes to school, rather than get in a battle consider letting the child wear what he/she wants. Most likely the child will realize before school is out that what he is

wearing was a mistake.

- Set boundaries. When a child says, "I want what I want and I want it now," be ready to reinforce boundaries and remind the children who is the boss. At the same time, allow recognition of the child's developing independence.
- Determine your parenting style and stick to it! One type of style is "democratic parenting," in which parents are clear with the rules of conduct and behavior.

You do need to be flexible, while at the same time holding to a set of expectations. An example would be setting an extended curfew time for occasions like attending prom or spending time with a friend.

The child's role would be to complete his necessary chores earlier in order to attend the activity.

In this instance, the chores get completed and the flexibility does not compromise the parent's rules.

Problems arise when parents waver in their rule-setting. Teens in particular can recognize this "on again/off again" position by parents and can use these occasions to debate why they think the parent's position is unfair.

We are living in a fast-paced world in which opportunities to relax are not always available.

By the time parents get home from work, get supper ready, get the kids to complete homework and then off to bed, it all starts over in less than 12 hours. It can be a bit much sometimes.

However, it is important that

parents also take care of themselves. To accomplish this it may be necessary for parents to limit their children's activities in order to minimize that feeling of "no time for us." Setting limits also could lessen some of the stress the kids feel.

Do enjoy your children, but also take care of yourselves.

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