

## Hand-out for Parents

# 20 TIPS TO HELP YOU RAISE A GREAT KID

### Reduce stress in your child's environment

Parents can't take away all of a child's stress. But too much stress interferes with children's self-control and thinking ability. If your child is irritable, easily upset and difficult to soothe, think about how to reduce stress:

- Make sure your child gets exercise and time to play.
- Good nutrition and enough sleep help kids cope with stress. Tired, hungry kids get stressed out more easily.
- Morning routines get the day off to a good start and bedtime routines help kids relax at day's end.
- Learn to manage your own stress. Your stress and the mood problems it causes can be a source of stress for your kids.



### Teach and model stress management skills

- Become aware of your child's and your own stressors and find ways to reduce them when possible.
- Learn relaxation breathing with your child. Here's how: sit quietly, or lie down and close your eyes. Then imagine you have a balloon on your belly. Breathe in slowly to a count of four and imagine the balloon filling with air. Now let the air out of the balloon by breathing out slowly, again to a count of four. Repeat five times. Try doing this with your child. You will both feel calmer.

### Teach children to solve problems

Solving a problem reduces the stress it causes. It's helpful to break a problem down into small steps.

1. What is the problem?
2. What are some possible solutions?
3. Which solution do I want to try?
4. How well did the solution work?

### Teach optimistic thinking

- Gently challenge children's negative thoughts.
- Show children more positive (but still realistic) ways of looking at negative situations.

### Build strong, supportive parent-child relationships

- Follow young children's lead. Notice and respond to their interests.
- Make time to do something with your child that you both enjoy.
- Read to your child; it supports literacy and is a great way to spend time together.
- Watch for little opportunities to connect and interact during meals, in the car or while watching television (put down that cellphone!).

### Support children's competence

- Encourage unstructured play. This is one way children learn about decision-making, cause and effect and problem-solving.
- Support children's interests, so they can develop skills and knowledge that contribute to their sense of competence.
- Use positive discipline that helps children understand the impact of their actions.
- Let children help with household tasks that involve life skills, like cooking, simple repairs, or pet care.

### Build emotional skills

- Show empathy for children's feelings and comfort them when they are distressed.
- Respect children's emotions and allow them to express their feelings.
- Teach children the language of emotions. Talk about their feelings, your feelings and others' feelings.
- Share positive emotions with your children.

Remember, your modeling is the most powerful teacher. Let your children see your own stress