

Hand-out for Parents

10 STRESSBUSTERS FOR WORKING PARENTS

STRESS IS A FACT of life, especially when we are juggling two big responsibilities like a job and parenting. Here are ten stress management tips for working parents.

1. Watch for overscheduling. Time pressures are the most common stressor identified by moms and dads in our Working Parents Survey. If time is a stressor for you, take a look at your daily and weekly schedule. What are the top priorities? Could some activities or commitments be eliminated?

2. Take care of your physical well-being. Don't forget the basics: a good diet, reducing caffeine and alcohol and getting enough exercise and rest. Physical activity is nature's gift for stress management. Getting enough sleep (7-8 hours a night) helps our brains and bodies recharge, which leaves us better equipped to deal with stress.

3. Use your vacation. A surprising number of Canadians don't take all their vacation time. Everyone needs vacation time to decompress and recover from stress. If you have a "staycation," build in some fun and relaxing activities. If you do go away, try coming back a day early so you have time to get organized and unpacked before returning to work.

4. If you're sick, stay home. You're not doing yourself any favours by pushing yourself to work when you're ill. And you don't help productivity if you make your colleagues sick.

5. Plan ahead. Better organization can ease those daily small stresses. What would make things run more smoothly for you? It could be planning your dinner menu for the week, keeping a better record of family activities and to-dos, or setting out the kids' clothes the night before.

6. Set boundaries between your work and non-work. Take a break from your devices when you



get home. Can that e-mail wait until tomorrow morning?

7. Make time for "we time" with your kids. Good times with your children help you maintain the positive relationships that are the foundation of good parenting. They also generate positive emotions and memories that help us recover from the stresses of family life.

8. A little "me time" is also important. Taking time for things you enjoy may feel like "robbing" your precious time with the kids. But "me time" can help you recharge your energy so you can be at your best for your family.

9. Connect with other parents. One of our most important stress management strategies is spending time with and getting support from people we enjoy and who make us feel good about ourselves. When you're a parent, hanging out with other parents and kids helps you feel less isolated.

10. Develop the habit of gratitude. Gratitude generates positive emotions that reduce stress. Try this as an exercise. For the next week, write down three things you are thankful for each day. See if it changes your perspective on your life.