



## Building Strong Families

### All Stressed Out!



There are times when we all get stressed out. This can happen to children as well as to adults. Our attitude can determine how our bodies react to stress. It is up to parents to help their child deal with a stressful situation or even make changes in schedules or activities to prevent stress in their child's life.

#### Several things can cause stress for a child:

**Responsibility** – Make sure your child does not have too much family responsibility, such as caring for younger siblings, too much housework, preparing meals, or even listening to your complaints about work.

**Changing schedules** – It is difficult for some children to adjust if there are many changes in their schedules each day. This can include going from home to child care, then to school, back to child care, and then back home again. After-school activities and sports cause more changes in their daily schedules.

**Emotional stress** – This can be caused by parents arguing, divorce or separation, moving to a new home, or the birth of a sibling. Also, separation anxiety, which can happen when parents need to be away from their child, is normal for children at certain ages.

**School stress** – This can be caused by behaviors of other children at school, poor vision or hearing, classroom size, or boredom with school work.

**Media stress** – Television shows and video games can present stressful information or expose children to violence. Television shows tend to give kids get too much information at a fast pace. Children don't have time to adjust before more information is presented. Television and video games also take away from play time, which is a great stress reliever for children.

Reduce stress in your child's life by making sure you schedule time every day for your child to play, daydream, and look at books. Kids need to be kids. Keep schedule changes and extra activities to a minimum. Make time to talk with your child each day. Take time to enjoy your child and reduce stress in your life, too!

### Things to Do with Kids

**Play is a great stress reliever for kids. The following are some stress-reducing activities:**

- Paper ripping can be fun. Let your kids have a "ripping good time" with old news papers or magazines. Let them rip and tear the paper any way they want. Children often enjoy crumpling paper into balls and throwing them. These paper balls are soft and safe.
- Finger painting is a great way to relieve stress. Cover your table with an old plastic tablecloth or shower curtain. Give your child large pieces of paper and some finger paints. Using fingers, hands, and even elbows, kids can have fun painting.
- Drawing with chalk on the sidewalk, patio, or driveway, where it can easily wash off, is another stress-reducing activity.
- Laughter is a great way to prevent stress. Sing silly songs or read some funny poems or stories. Take time to be silly with your child.
- Squeezing and pounding play dough is another good way to get rid of stress.



## Recipe for Play Dough



### **What you need:**

A bowl,  
a spoon,  
3 cups flour,  
1 cup salt,  
1 cup water,  
1 tbsp. cooking oil, and food coloring

### **What to do:**

Mix the flour and salt in the bowl. Add water, the cooking oil, and a few drops of the food coloring. Mix together and knead until it is smooth.

## Safe Holiday Times

**Here are some pointers to make the holidays safe for you and your family:**

- If you have a holiday tree, choose a safe spot for it away from a heat source and where it will not dry out too fast. Place it in a secure stand so it will not fall over when children are playing nearby.
- Use only tested and approved lights.
- Decorations should be non-flammable or flame-retardant.
- Keep sharp or breakable ornaments away from your children.
- Do not leave lighted candles unattended.
- Holidays tend to bring people of all ages together in the kitchen. Supervise your child closely at these times to prevent injuries.
- Be aware of poisonous plants such as poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe.
- Continue to check for toys recalled due to lead paint, magnets, chemical substances, or small parts. Go to the Consumer Product Safety Commission Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for the latest information.
- Read the labels on all toys before allowing your child to play with them.
- Make sure medications are safely out of reach of children. This is especially important when visiting relatives or friends.
- The whole family needs to buckle up when traveling in a vehicle. Children must be in federally approved safety seats or seat belts appropriate for their age.
- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle!
- Walk around your vehicle before backing up to make sure all children are safe.



**Family Time/Work Time: December 2007**

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