

# FAMILY *Ties*



## *Parenting Matters*

### **When Parenting Makes Your Head Spin! \_\_\_\_\_**

Most parents agree: It doesn't take much to occasionally feel overwhelmed as a parent. Your child can easily throw you off-kilter by raising issues you're unprepared to tackle or acting in ways you weren't expecting.

A 2002 Search Institute-YMCA parent survey, *Building Strong Families*, reveals that three out of four parents felt they were doing "less than great" as parents, and one in five said they were either doing "poorly" or "just okay." All parents find themselves stymied by parenting at one time or another. Let's take a look at some ways to keep a cool head when those times hit:

Know that you're not alone: Even though parenting can be quite rewarding, many also say that it's downright tough at times.

Try to develop a sense of humor. Kids come up with the craziest ideas. Instead of losing your temper when their ideas go awry, take a break, deal with the situation, and try to find a bit of humor in it.

Get to know other parents. Make an effort to introduce yourself and get to know parents who have children in your child's grade. This can be a great support network. It's vital to network with other parents when you're a single parent. Some get together regularly to discuss creative ways to make life easier. One solution might involve setting up a childcare co-op.

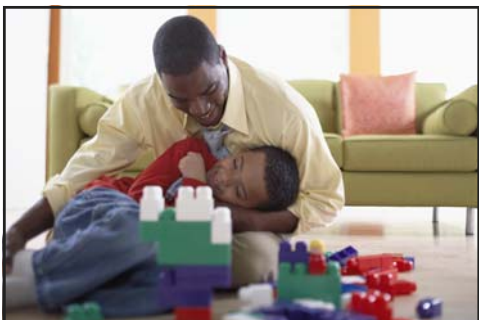
Be clear that you're not your children's "dumping ground." Kids are notorious for saying, "I need to be at such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time" a few minutes before the event begins. Teach kids to be respectful of your time and ask them to give you proper notice—without expecting you to do everything for them. They can do their part.

Pace yourself if you have very young children. This is an extremely intense time for most parents. Take naps when your kids nap. Cut back on other activities if you need more time to yourself. Find other caring, responsible adults such as grandparents, aunts or uncles who can spend time with your kids and give you a much-needed break from time to time. However, remember to enjoy these years with your young children.

Parenting school-age children can become overwhelming because there's so much to keep track of with your growing child's physical needs and homework and school demands. Parents often feel like a cab driver. Figure out ways to make the "getting there" and "getting back" times more fun for you both.

Remember the early childhood years and how they made your head spin? Although your kids are pulling away from you and becoming more independent, as children reach the early teen years- it's important to monitor and remain involved in what they're doing, who they're with, and where they're going. Kids at this age can be impulsive, and may pressure you to let them do things—fast. Slow down the process. Ask questions. Help young teenagers think through actions and consequences. The teen years are often described as a period of "storm and stress." And while you may find yourself in far more contentious situations with your emerging teenager, remember to love, support, and listen to your teenager, too. As long as you're aware of what's happening in your children's lives, you can relax and enjoy some of the funny, crazy things they do.

Information source: [Parenting Matters](#) on [MVParents.com](#)



## **NORTHWEST AREA**

### *Family Newsletter*

Prepared by Rhonda Rosenboom,  
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## Family

### MEALTIME FAVORITE

#### Grilled Cheese and Fruit Sandwich

*A tasty twist on a classic! Great for any quick meal, including breakfast.*

- 8 slices cinnamon raisin or whole wheat bread
- 2 Tablespoon soft margarine
- 4 slices processed American cheese food (or other favorite cheese, sliced thin)
- 2 small apples or pears, thinly sliced

1. WASH hands.
2. SPREAD one side of each bread slice lightly with margarine.
3. PLACE four slices of bread, margarine side down,

and top each with one cheese slice.

4. ARRANGE fruit slices over the cheese. Top with remaining bread slices, margarine side up.
5. PLACE sandwiches on a griddle or skillet over medium heat. Cook 2 – 3 minutes, turn, and cook 2 – 3 more minutes or until golden and cheese is melted.

Nutrition facts: 1 sandwich = 400 calories, 16 g fat, 12 g protein, 9 g fiber

Taken from: *Food and Fun for healthy families*, 2009 Nutrition Calendar, EFNEP, ISU Extension.

## Quick Eating

### KEEP IT HEALTHY

#### Quick and Healthy Meals for Busy Fall Schedules

Fall activities are in full swing and families are busier than ever! If meals are frequently coming from carry-out pizza, the school concession stand, or fast food, your family's diet may need a boost. Here is a nutrition check list to see how healthy your family is eating:

Each member of my family is regularly eating...

- ◆ At least 3 ounces of whole grains everyday.
- ◆ A minimum of 2 – 3 cups of vegetables every day
- ◆ At least 2 cups of fruit per day
- ◆ Vegetables of many different colors every week (green, orange/yellow, red, white/brown, blue/purple)
- ◆ At least 3 cups of milk per day (1 cup yogurt or 1.5 ounces natural cheese = 1 cup milk)
- ◆ 5 – 6 ounces of lean meat or protein foods each day

Need more information on healthy eating? Go to [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)



#### Tips for Quick and Healthy Meals

Keep your refrigerator, freezer and cupboards stocked with foods that will help you make healthy meals: instant brown rice, canned and frozen vegetables and fruits, whole wheat tortillas, fresh fruits in season.. etc.

Use the food pyramid to plan your quick meals. Just having soup and a sandwich?

- Make sandwich with whole wheat bread
- Add lettuce, tomato slices or other favorite vegetables
- Serve with fresh fruit cut-up (or canned fruit) and a glass of milk
- A quick pyramid-complete meal!

Interested in cooking ahead for quick healthy meals later? Check out *Healthy Meals in a Hurry.... 14 main dishes for now and later*. This mini-cookbook is available for \$2.50 from your local county ISU extension office, or order on-line at the ISU Extension Publications store. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/> Healthy Meals in a Hurry, PM 2035

## Financial Stress

### MANAGE EMOTIONAL STRESS

If you are facing household hardships as a result of this year's unusual weather conditions, you may be experiencing stress on a daily basis. But if you or others in your family are experiencing sleepless nights, short tempers or constant worry, it could be a sign that stress is taking a dangerous toll on your health and relationships.

"Recognizing stress overload early can help you take steps to minimize its harmful effects," says Kyle Kostelecky, Iowa State University Extension family life specialist. "The way you experience and react to stress will differ from the way others in your circumstances will experience stress. Even if you can withstand major financial fluctuations, you and your family may still have to adjust expectations, dreams and goals to fit new realities."

One of life's biggest stresses – change – can come up quickly. As economic challenges necessitate new ways of working together, comfortable routines are altered and the sense of order and security can be threatened. While a certain amount of stress is unavoidable and usually manageable, too much stress can hurt both physical and mental health.

#### Managing stress

Once individuals recognize symptoms of stress overload, how should they manage it? Kostelecky said it's unrealistic to think you can eliminate stress, but there are ways to reduce the impacts. These tactics have been helpful to many people during particularly stressful times:

- Do something about one small piece of a bigger problem.
- Ask for help from family, friends, business associates or community resources.
- Use exercise to reduce symptoms of stress.
- Do something enjoyable each day.



- Protect physical health by eating well and avoiding alcohol or drugs.
- Work on accepting change as a natural part of life.

#### Barriers to managing stress

Unfortunately, reactions to stress overload can make it difficult to take steps that might help. Too much responsibility can make it seem almost impossible to take charge. Some barriers that can block change include:

- Trying to solve too many problems at once.
- Blaming others or not recognizing the degree of control we do have.
- Letting stress affect our judgment.
- Using drugs or alcohol as substitutes for solving the problems.
- Having a negative outlook.

#### Strengthen relationships

To help yourself take action during stressful times, strengthen personal and family relationships by:

- Increasing the time spent with supportive family and friends, who are important buffers in times of stress.
- Practicing positive communication with loved ones by listening and expressing appreciation.
- Making personal health a priority (because it is essential for coping with stress).
- Strengthening spiritual resources.
- Being mindful of what is most important to oneself.
- Remaining aware of ongoing changes that contribute to stress, and postponing new commitments if they will add stress.
- Reaching out to people in the community (being there for others strengthens one's own circle of support).

## Stress Affects Family Relationships

Whatever the situation, if a family is under stress it can strain relationships.

According to Rhonda Rosenboom, an Iowa State University Extension family life specialist, “During times of stress your behavior affects the people around you -- including your partner. Your behavior speaks louder than your intentions.” However, Rosenboom said, “There are many ways to help strengthen your relationship, and it’s important to find what works best for you and your partner.”

The ISU Extension specialist offers these suggestions

**Express appreciation.** Without words and actions, most people do not feel loved or appreciated. When couples regularly give each other compliments and praise, it is a real boost to the relationship.

**Work on your communication skills.** Listen to what your family member says. Likewise, speak up and clearly state what you feel and think. Good communication also includes the ability to accept temporary withdrawal or silence, as even silence can be informative to you and helpful to your family member.

**Touch often.** Physical contact improves emotional growth and strengthens a relationship. As time passes, the touching in a relationship often decreases. When a couple makes a decision to touch each other more, it has a positive effect on the relationship and will create feelings leading to more romance.

**Grow individually.** Couples need time apart as well as time together. Make a list of things you enjoy doing. Do those things you enjoy and you then will find you have more to contribute to the relationship with the one you love.

**Accept each other.** At some point in a relationship you realize there are some things about the other person you are never going to change. Once you understand this, the relationship can move to a deeper level. Spend energy strengthening the bond rather than trying to change a partner.

**Understand influences.** Recognize the influence that family, friends, co-workers, mass media and even society have on your relationship. Balance that influence with your need to be on your own as a couple.

**Develop healthy humor skills.** Healthy humor can be used in a relationship to maintain a positive outlook on life, for entertainment, to reduce tension, to express feelings of warmth, to put others at ease, to facilitate conversation, to lessen anxiety and to help cope with difficult situations. (Sarcasm, put-downs and teasing are not healthy forms of humor.)

**Seek spiritual agreement.** Religion/spirituality can be either a positive or negative influence in a relationship depending upon whether the couple is compatible in their beliefs. Couples should face differences frankly and try to seek agreement. Where that is not possible, they can at least agree to accept disagreements and seek to understand and be tolerant of different views.

**Promote good health.** Start with the obvious -- follow a healthy diet, abstain from smoking and drugs, and don’t drink to excess. Schedule regular health checkups and engage in exercise. Wise couples learn to promote good physical and mental health practices with each other. Then they are better able to cope with whatever comes into their lives.

“It can be hard to communicate calmly with the people who share our roof and responsibilities. Try to remember that even in a stressful situation, you have control of your relationships,” Rosenboom said.

For more information, contact Rosenboom at 712-957-5045, or contact your ISU Extension County Office.