



EMPOWERING  
CHILDREN  
FOUNDATION



**I am a parent,  
I experience stress**

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URZĄD DO SPRAW  
CUDZOZIEMCÓW

A photograph of a woman with dark hair hugging a young child with light brown hair. The woman is wearing a dark top, and the child is wearing a plaid shirt. They are outdoors, with a blurred background of greenery and sunlight. A red speech bubble is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

## Understand stress **What is stress?**

*When an event or situation makes us feel strongly anxious or disrupts the course of our daily life, we are said to be experiencing stress.*



### What are the causes of stress?

Stress depends on several factors. Below are some of them.

- ➔ **What kind of person you are**  
Some people seem calm and confident by nature. Others feel tense and anxious most of the time, or lack confidence.
- ➔ **What happens to you**  
Certain events are difficult for almost all people – both joyful experiences, such as the birth of a child or winning the lottery, and sad ones, such as relationship breakdown, unemployment, migration or housing problems. However, the causes of stress vary from person to person. Something that one person perceives as a challenge, for another may be a threat. For some of us, the daily 'disasters' are the most difficult - a run in your pantyhose right after you put them on, a queue at the post office or a car that won't start.
- ➔ **Your child**  
Some children are naturally calm, while others are more demanding with their parents, which can sometimes be a source of stress.
- ➔ **Your responsibilities**  
Everyone needs a certain level of responsibility to feel like their life has meaning. However, when you feel you have too many commitments, you can feel stressed.
- ➔ **The people around you**  
Whatever you are facing, it is always easier to cope with difficulties with a supportive partner, family and friends at your side. Feeling a lack of support can cause stress.
- ➔ **Feeling in control of your own life**  
Whether you take certain actions to relieve stress and make your life easier depends on several factors, but mostly on you. You can't change everything, but in almost every situation there is something you can do.





## How does stress affect our lives?

Stress affects us in many ways. It can make us feel tired, unhappy, irritable or inclined to cry. At its worst, it can lead to panic attacks, insomnia and severe depression. Stress can also cause physical ailments such as headaches, migraine or asthma. Some experts believe that by damaging our immune system, stress may play a role in the onset of other conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and some types of cancer. Stress also affects the relationship between parents and children, so it is vital that parents understand why they experience stress and how they feel under its influence. Only then will they be able to counteract the stress in their lives and, in turn, the damage that their children may experience as a result.

Prepare a schedule of your typical day and mark on it the moments that are stressful and those that give you the most pleasure.

Are there moments during the day when you are so upset that you get angry with your children? If so, think about what you can do to make those moments easier.

## The 10 most common stressful situations

No parent can be expected to be calm and composed at all times. Sometimes our children's challenging behaviour or demands, overlaid with other difficulties in life, simply push the limits of our endurance. Here are some of the most common situations that cause stress for parents, as well as tips on how to deal with them.

### 1. She cries all the time

It is worth remembering that crying is the most effective way for a young child to tell you that she



needs something. If your little one is crying for no obvious reason, you can try any of these methods:

- gentle rocking,
- cuddling and gentle stroking,
- music and singing,
- wrapping the baby tightly in a baby sling,
- the sound of a Hoover,
- a car ride.

### 2. My son does not do what I ask him to do

Try to determine:

- Does your child understand what you are saying to him?
- Are you asking too much of him?

Focus on positive requests rather than negative ones. 'Please play quieter' sounds better than: 'Don't make such an awful noise'.

### 3. My children argue all the time

A lot of parents feel very bad if their children argue. They worry that their kids will never learn to co-exist consensually with others. Children need to learn to resolve conflicts among themselves, so try not to interfere every time they argue. Usually their quarrels do not last long and after a while the children are at their best again.

- If you have to intervene, try to establish what happened. Listen to each child and help them understand the other's point of view.
- If you have two or more children, try to find a way to make time for each of them.

### 4. She has terrible tantrums

Young children experience strong emotions and sometimes express them very violently. Try to remain calm.



**5. My son goes on and on about what other children are allowed to do and he is not**

- Listen to what your child says and ask yourself why you have set such rules.
- Consider whether any compromise is possible in this situation.

**6. He does not want to go to bed**

Most children think that going to bed is a missed opportunity to have fun.

- Let your child finish playing and tell him that it is getting close to time to go to bed.
- Try to make going to bed an experience that your child will enjoy; you can read bedtime stories to them.
- If you start to feel irritable, ask your partner or an older child to do it for you.
- Remember that children vary in terms of how much sleep they need.

We have left blank spaces below for you to write in situations that cause you stress.

These do not have to be events or situations that you think are considered stressful by other people. The important thing is that they are so for you.

7. ....

8. ....

9. ....

10. ....

## How to cope with stress?

You are not able to completely eliminate stress from your life, but the following tips will help you get your daily stress under control.

### Talk and listen

Communication is the key to all good relationships. If you don't ask for what you need, you probably won't get it.

### Plan ahead

Recognise potentially stressful moments during the day and think in advance about how you can deal with them.

## Most important!

### 1. Find time for yourself

Make sure you have some time for yourself – preferably every day. You are someone important too. If you're having a really tough week, promise to treat yourself to something special.

### 3. Congratulate yourself

If you have dealt with a difficult situation, you have the right to be proud of yourself.

### 5. Remember that stress is contagious

If your children see you getting upset and angry every time things don't go your way, they are likely to start reacting similarly to disappointments and difficulties in their own lives.

### 2. Try to relax

Find ways to relax. Exercise, listen to soft music, have a cup of tea or do anything else that helps you relax.

### 4. Try to look at life optimistically

Focus on what you enjoy most about being a parent and the good moments of your life.

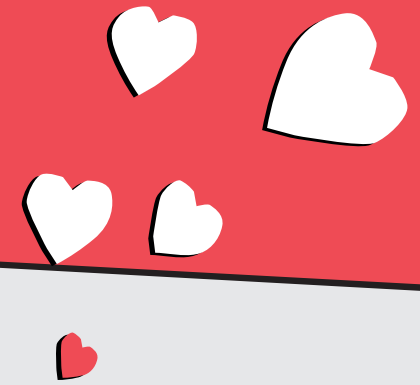
### 6. Ask for help

This is a positive, constructive action, not a sign of weakness! Don't assume that just because you are a parent, you are the only person who can meet your child's needs. And remember that many parents choose to get help.



# Count to ten and think again

When your child upsets you, you may say or do something in anger that could hurt them or make them feel bad.



Here are some tips to help you cool down:

1

Breathe slowly and deeply. Count to ten.

2

Remind yourself that you are an adult and you can be the example of good behaviour to your child.

3

Think about what you are going to say. How would you feel if you heard something like this from another adult?

4

Go into another room for a while and think about why you are feeling angry. Is it really because of the child, or is there something else that is upsetting you?

5

Call your partner or someone else you can talk to. Maybe the problem won't seem so serious when you share it with another adult.

6

Go outside to get some fresh air.

7

When you're feeling really depressed, make a treat for yourself. Plan something that puts you in a good mood – have a cup of good tea, take a hot bath, go shopping.

8

Sometimes the best medicine is the sense of humour. Try to see the funny side of the situation.

9

Get out of the room and shout if you feel like it. It's better to yell at blank walls than at children.

10

Imagine a beautiful, peaceful setting or your own image of paradise. This will help you to calm down. Remember that being a parent is one of your most valuable and important tasks. Looking back, many parents regret that they didn't spend more time doing what made them happy with their children and less time getting angry with them for insignificant reasons. A single angry word will not harm your child if you have a good relationship. However, if you get angry often, your child will suffer and you will also feel bad. So why not start taking action today and take some time to think about what you like about being a parent and how you can solve the problems that upset you? This could be the most important step to enjoying your relationship with your child to the fullest and helping them to grow into a happy person.



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