



## Master the toughest stress-busting skills to limit stress from the start:

### \* LEARN TO SAY "NO."

It's not easy, but it makes a huge difference. Fewer activities on your calendar means more time to relax with your family! If you feel guilty about saying no, remember that saying no means you are putting your family first, and you can always feel good about that.

### \* LIMIT TRAVEL.

On top of everything else, long trips can be more than your family can handle especially during stressful times like the holidays. If you still think it's important to see your family and friends, suggest you visit them a bit later in the year when things calm down and you'll be able to enjoy the visit even more.

### \* SPEND SMART.

Finances are another leading cause of family stress. Parents often go overboard in spending and end up neglecting the importance of quality time with their family. Concentrate more on how much *time* you are spending with your family instead of how much *money*. It's always a better investment!

# How to deal with FAMILY STRESS

All families deal with stress at one time or another. With the images of "perfect" families we so often see in magazines and on TV, parents and children can begin to develop unrealistic expectations for both themselves and their family members.

### Why doesn't anyone else seem stressed?

It's important to remember that your family is not alone! Families today are all dealing with busy schedules, high costs and long to-do lists, all natural triggers for more stress. If your family gets stressed out, that's okay. The important thing is how you choose to handle the stress.

### What does stress do to families?

- \* Arguments, fighting and other poor communication skills
- \* Fatigue, health problems and general exhaustion because of busy schedules
- \* Confusion (especially in children) about relationships with other family members
- \* More dependence on food, alcohol and other substances

## WORK TOGETHER TO FIGHT STRESS!

**1. Talk about your feelings:** Keep the lines of communication open so that every family member feels comfortable voicing their feelings if they start to feel stressed out.

**2. If you think your kids might be getting overwhelmed by all of their activities and events, ask them about it:** Let them know it's okay if they need a break. Then take action. If late bedtimes and crazy schedules are wreaking havoc on their behavior, you might need to say "no" to hosting the baseball team picnic or signing your daughter up for another dance class. Spending a quiet night at home with the family will help your kids feel better and show them that above all, your family comes first.

**3. If you find yourself getting stressed out, TALK:** Your behavior can set the tone for the rest of the family. When things get crazy, sit down and talk to your children about it, if they are old enough. If they know you're choosing not to do something (like attend a neighborhood party) because you'd rather spend quality time with them at home, they're more likely to understand and be happy with your decision.

**4. Set "Family Priorities":** One of the biggest causes of family stress is having simply TOO MUCH to do in a short period of time. Sit down as a family now and make decisions about the activities and traditions that are most important to all of you.

**5. Get everyone involved.** Once you've made your list of priorities, get everyone involved. Too often, parents are running around like crazy trying to make everything perfect for their kids but don't get to spend quality time with them. Plus, kids will feel good when they feel they are an important part of the process.

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