

## Parent Stress: Finding Creative Ways to Cope



Raising kids can be an exhilarating adventure - rewarding and precious. Seeing life through a child's eyes keeps parents in touch with our own sense of wonder. Kids remind us of the simple, everyday beauties and mysteries we adults often take for granted.

*"Being a parent doesn't mean you have to forget who you are as an Individual"*

Being a parent centers us by giving us a clear purpose. Being responsible for kids' welfare gives us a frame of reference for making life decisions - both big and small. And in the grand scheme, good parenting is a great way to make a positive contribution to the world.

But in nitty-gritty daily life, child-rearing is also a tough, draining, and stressful job. It's often overwhelming and confusing. And it just never lets up. Even when kids are grown and gone, Worries still haunt the dark of a parent's sleepless night.

Because of those diverse demands, parenting is riddled with occupational hazards: fatigue, nagging self-doubt, short-temper, and mental-exhaustion - in other words, parent burn-out. When burn-out isn't avoided, or early symptoms are not managed effectively, important things in life get lost in the shuffle - important things like creating a peaceful and nurturing home environment for kids.

You are your kids' primary support, their safety net as they learn to independently maneuver the challenges, expectations, and obstacles of life. To do your best, parents need a lot of stamina and fortitude. You have to take good care of yourself *first*. Only then can you take good care of the kids. If you burn out, their sense of stability and security is undermined.

### Try the following tips:

1. Reach out for help from family members and friends.
2. Get regular exercise, sleep and eat nutritious foods.
3. Take time for yourself to get mental relief from non-stop parenting demands.
4. Make time for your old hobby ~ or find a new one. Pursuing your own interests is a great role model for kids' leaning.
5. At least monthly, have dinner with friend at a restaurant that doesn't even have a children's menu, or if you prefer, cook dinner and invite friends over.

When all is said and done, what kids need most is your energy, positive attitude, time, and attention. Providing that is a more precious and influential gift than money could ever buy. So to counter burn-out, make time for yourself. Manage your time wisely. Work at keeping in touch with your enthusiasm for parenting, and keep your emotional reserves in good shape. Only then will you consistently be able to give your kids the support they need most - your helping hand and understanding shoulder to lean upon.

Source: Karen Stephens, Parenting Exchange



Start your adventure today! Visit your public library to check out a pass for two or four **free admissions**, depending on location to one of the participating museums. MAP passes may be restricted at the library that serves the community in which they reside. Be sure to call your local library for more information!

### Think B-R-A-I-N

- B** = Breathe. *Breathe deeply 5 times. Release the air slowly.*
- R** = Relax. *Tell yourself to relax, whether in your head or out loud. Your body will do that for you.*
- A** = Ask yourself what you need to feel. *Instead, ask yourself what you need to feel. Calm? In control? At peace? What?*
- I** = Imagine feeling that.
- N** = Now, are you feeling calmer?

# Your Child's Temperament & Environment

**TIP:** Assess your child's physical surroundings to reduce challenges to temperament.

Everyone has a particular temperament - a combination of personality traits with which we are born. How well a child's temperament fits with his or her environment is a toss of the dice. Sometimes the "goodness of fit" is wonderful - such as a high-intensity, very physical child living on a farm in the country where there's lots of opportunity for outside play. Other times the fit isn't so good - such as a very regular child being faced with the constant disruptions in a schedule where her parents work different shifts.

Stress comes from challenging a trait. For example, it is very demanding for a highly physical and "distractible" child to sit still for an hour in church. The environment challenges his temperament. "The complexities of environment and temperament fit are immense," says Lyndall Shick, counselor and author of [\*Understanding Temperament: Strategies for Creating Family Harmony\*](#). She counsels parents to assess their present living situation in terms of their child's temperament. What parts fit? What parts do not?

**Tools** - When you identify areas of your child's environment that are challenging, Shick says you can often find ways to alleviate the stress by changing certain things.

## Child is/shows:

## You Can Do This:

High Activity

*Provide lots of large muscle activities: trampoline, swings, bars, bikes, outdoor chores.*

Slow adapting (has a hard time with Change.

*Keep transitions to a minimum; keep furniture in the same place.*

Quick to approach (jumps right in; not hesitant.

*Put away breakables; provide adequate supervision; expect messes..*

High distractibility

*Limit stimulation (turn off TV, radio, etc.); rotate toys to decrease quantity available at one time.*

High sensory Awareness

*Buy smooth, comfortable clothing; cut tags out of clothing; buy seamless socks; keep the volume turned down; keep home at comfortable temperature.*

Source: Shari Steelsmith, Parenting Press



## Have an Idea!

*Parenting Views is published four times per year, by the MSU Extension Center in Macomb County.*

*If you have any comments, questions, or ideas for an article, please contact Anna Duffer, Editor, at 586-469-7614, or send an email to: [Anna.Duffer@macombcountymi.gov](mailto:Anna.Duffer@macombcountymi.gov).*

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If you would like to receive the electronic version, please send an email to [Anna.Duffer@macombcountymi.gov](mailto:Anna.Duffer@macombcountymi.gov) and we will add your email to our list. As always, we do not publish or provide email address outside of Macomb MSUE.

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# Child Nutrition

## Obesity in Childhood: Reducing Your Child's Risk

These news headlines don't predict good futures for children. Overweight children often endure self-esteem and confidence issues as well as physical health complications.

If we fail to reduce obesity rates in children, we prime them for illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. And we'll be the first parents to raise an entire generation with a shorter life expectancy than our own. That's a disappointing legacy we can avoid with conscious effort.

Many factors influence children's weight gain, including genetics and unique biological make-up, which are beyond parent control. Nevertheless, there are ways to combat excess weight-gain and obesity in children.



Weight gain is a matter of taking in more calories than one burns - whether child or adult. Matching your child's quantity of nutrient-filled calorie intake with their daily physical activity will go a long way to reducing the risk of childhood obesity. Parents can help children enjoy regular physical activity and eat more wisely so these habits become second-nature to them as adults.

### Increase Family Physical Activity

Humans are built to move, not to sit still or lay back for prolonged hours. Simply moving through play helps children burn calories. And a child who is active on a regular basis not only burns more calories when active, but also when at rest. Increased active play and movement in children's daily lives plays a major role in their weight management.

Children need daily activity that engages both large and small muscles and requires balance and coordination. It will build their body, mind, and self-esteem.

Following are ways to do it:

- **Be a good role model.**
- **Resist excessive sedentary entertainment.**
- **Get around by foot more often. Involve children in physically active household chores.**
- **Identify safe active play spaces. Plan for active play in all kinds of weather.**
- **Offer fun active play opportunities.**

- **Encourage Wise Eating Habits**
- **Build positive attitudes toward all foods by being a good role model.**
- **Set a predictable, scheduled time for meals.**
- **Plan for small, regular snacks between meals.**
- **Keep food in perspective**
- **Make mealtime a warm, welcoming family ritual.**
- **Eat at home more often and fix meals together**
- **Encourage children to drink more water.**
- **Provide a variety of nutrient-filled foods.**
- **Cook foods using a variety of methods.**
- **Don't serve huge portions.**
- **Don't force children into cleaning their plate.**
- **Avoid using food or trips to a fast food restaurant as a reward or punishment.**
- **Plant a vegetable garden and/or fruit trees together.**



So there you have it. If your family eats more wisely and has more fun moving together, you're two giant steps toward reducing your child's risk of obesity. For that, give yourself a pat on the back; you deserve it.

Source: Karen Stephens, Parenting Exchange

## Snack Idea!

### Carrot, Orange and Raisin Salad

(low-fat/low-sodium)

- 1 ½ cups washed and shredded carrots
- 1 orange peeled and diced
- ½ cup raisins
- 1/3 cup low-fat plain yogurt

#### Directions:

1. Stir carrots, orange pieces and raisins together in a mixing bowl.
2. Add the yogurt and stir.
3. Chill in the refrigerator.

Six ½ cup servings. 68 Calories; 2g Protein; 16g Carbohydrate; 2g Dietary Fiber 1mg Cholesterol; 21 mg Sodium. Exchanges: ½ Vegetable; 1 Fruit; 0 Fat.

Source: MSUE Eating Right is Basic

# Money Matters

## Learning the Value of a Dollar Starts Early

Knowing how to manage money well, being financially literate as it's called today, is a life skill every child needs to develop. You've already taught your children some money lessons. Your actions communicate them every day, whether intended or not.

### Money Basics Kids Need to Learn:

1. **Illustrate respect for money and how to use it responsibly.** Let children see you put financial literacy to good use in your daily family routines.

2. **Talk about wants, desires, and wishes and how they differ from basic needs.** Sometimes we buy what we wish, but usually we should stick to buying what we really need.

Dispel "magical thinking" that mom and dad will make every wish come instantly true with money. When children beg for a new treasure in the toy aisle, use that as a teachable moment to talk about wants and needs.

And take heart, it's not harmful to let child experience some temporary, age appropriate disappointment. If children believe a toy purchase will take place every time you enter a store, the outcome could be an over-indulged and spoiled child.

3. **Take children with you when you grocery shop.** Prior to shopping, include children in making a list. Even preschoolers can look into a low cupboard to report cereals needed.



Use coupons to model being an intentional consumer. Preschoolers can identify coupons in magazines or newspapers. Kindergarteners and older children can cut them out.

When you shop, keep to your list. Let kids help cross off items. Resist impulse buying. At the check out, let children hand money to the cashier to help them understand food requires money.

4. **Expect children to perform some chores for no allowance.** This could include bed making, putting toys away or taking dirty clothes to the hamper. This shows appreciation for family support and helps children feel like contributing members.

5. **By age four years, begin giving children an allowance to manage.** It should be pay for doing the "extra mile" chores, such as helping to gather aluminum can recycling, feeding pets, raking leaves, sweeping the porch, etc.



Some families require children to save a bit of allowance, spend a bit, and give a bit away to charity. Others let children spend the allowance however they wish, believing children will learn best from the consequences of their spending.

6. **Find ways to make saving and giving money tangible.** Together, make a homemade piggy bank and let kids fill it. Then open a savings account at a bank or credit union that offers "Kids Clubs" savings programs.

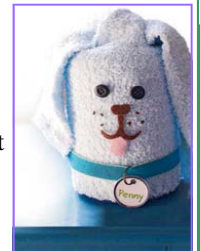
7. **Read children's books about money.** As with any other topic children need to learn about, there are books available worth exploring. They'll provide good information and open the door to "teachable moment" discussions. A suggested book is *Raising Money Smart Kids: What they Need to Know about Money and How to Tell Them*, by Janet Bodnar.

Source: Karen Stephens, *Parting Exchange*

## Make a Savings Bank

What you'll need:

- ♥ 20 to 28 oz plastic peanut butter jar with lid, or a 1-quart plastic deli container with lid.
- ♥ Utility knife and scissors
- ♥ Ruler
- ♥ 1 adult-sized solid-colored sock (the fuzzier and brighter, the better)
- ♥ Felt scraps, buttons, glue stick and permanent markers.
- ♥ Metal rim key tag (at office supply stores)
- ♥ 15-inch length of ribbon (in a color that contrasts with sock)



1. Screw or snap the lid on tightly onto the jar, then turn the jar upside down, onto its lid. Use the utility knife to carefully cut a coin slot (1 1/2 inches long and 1/4 inch wide) on the side of the jar, about an inch down from what's now the top of the bank.
2. Have your child pull the sock down over the jar until the heel of the sock is at the top of the bank and the cuff reaches the bottom (if the sock is a bit long, just trim the cuff to fit).
3. If your child is old enough to use scissors, have her cut the foot of the sock down the middle into two pieces (the dog's "ears"), stopping just before the top of the jar. She can tie the ears together in a loose knot at the top of the bank.
4. Use the scissors to cut through the sock to expose the coin slot.
5. Glue a felt-scrap-and-button face on the bank (or draw one on with markers).
6. Write the dog's name on the key tag, then thread the ribbon through the ring attached to the tag. Now attach the collar: Smear some glue one end of the ribbon, then stick that end onto the back of the bank, about 1 inch from the base. Wrap the ribbon around the bank until it meets the other end. Put more glue on this end of the ribbon, and press to adhere.

Source: *DisneyFamily.com*

# Technology

## Television and Technology: Select the Best, But Limit Children's Screen Time

In the U.S. today, television, videos, DVDs, and computers with games and web access are a household staple for most families. In fact, over 50% of children live in a home with at least three televisions. The average child is exposed to at least seven hours *daily* of media programming flashed to them through a screen.



Programs and games with worthwhile, solid content help children learn positive skills, both intellectual and social. Good media can be both exciting and relaxing for children. And it can be a way to share an interest with peers or to learn new facts.

But these potential positive affects also have a dark flip-side. At least 80% of media aired isn't developed with children in mind at all. But while older siblings or parents view programs, young children are likely to be viewing as well. And so children are often exposed to information too advanced, confusing, or graphic for preschool development.

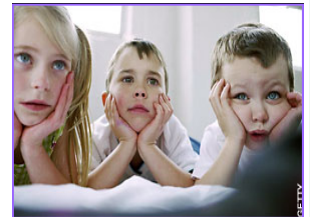
Media that communicates negative images, stereotypes, and violent behavior undermines a sense of security and self-control over aggression for all ages of children. The more hours per week a child spends watching television (whether it be entertainment or news programs), the more likely the child is to re-enact aggressive behaviors and language. More frequent child viewers are also more pessimistic and fearful, especially preschoolers still unable to

distinguish between "real" and "pretend" or between "real time" and repetitive "instant flashback" news coverage.

Children who consume many hours of "screen time" also show a tendency to be "de-sensitized" and more blasé about violence in "real life" or fantasy stories. There are other influences needling at children's emotions, too.

Commercial advertisers peddle wares via media trying to capture your child's "brand loyalty" by the age of 8 years. Most children accept commercials as fact rather than a sales-pitch designed for the seller's profit. And so kids are literally sitting ducks for one-sided commercials created to capitalize on children's trusting naiveté, limited experience, and under-developed reasoning skills.

And then there's all the leisure time media use gobbles up. The time children spend in screen time diverts precious energy that is far better channeled into active play with family and peers. Even good media excessively watched steals valuable time from children - time they need to develop and practice social skills, thinking strategies, and physical abilities, such as strength, coordination, and stamina. The loss of quality time spent actually interacting with family is as devastating to childhood as the negative, violent images that poor media can communicate.



Source: Karen Stephens, Parenting Exchange

## How Can I Regulate my Child's Television Watching?

1. Get the TV out of the child's bedroom. This promotes watching all they want, unsupervised.
2. Create a TV budget, post it to the refrigerator so they know the shows or movies they are going to watch and when.
3. Be a good TV role model. The whole family needs to participate in watching less and posting the family TV schedule.
4. Don't eat with the TV on. Dinner should be time to discuss events of the day, not watch TV.
5. Don't keep the TV on all the time. This promotes channel surfing and mindless watch. Tune into specific shows that are in your TV budget.
6. Create a list of activities with your child that you can do together instead of watching television. The list may include things like playing outside, drawing, dancing, going to the park, etc.



Source: [www.eXtension.org](http://www.eXtension.org)

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# Social Emotional Development

## Everyday Ways to Teach Children Manners & Social Skills

Being mannerly is a social skill parents help children master - it's an important one. The knack of cordially getting along with others opens doors



of opportunity, which stay closed to kids who act inconsiderate or in offensive ways.

Mannerly kids are preferred playmates; and they're more often invited to homes of friends, relatives, and neighbors. Children need a caring community

of people to build self esteem and a sense of belonging.

Teaching manners gives children a way to put respect into action. These manners must be sincere, heartfelt, and well-intentioned. Authentic respect involves far more than superficial words that children hurriedly spout off to appease an adult's upraised eyebrow.

An insincere, unfeeling "please" or "thank you" or "I'm sorry" rings hollow. Commanding children to apologize on cue teaches unthinking compliance and hypocrisy, not true respect. Even if children use the "magic word," the word is only magic when it's authentic and sincerely felt. Honest manners and genuine acts of respect build integrity and more easily reach another person's heart.

Whenever children are helped by someone, coach them in politeness. Remind them that people feel appreciated when thanked, whether with gestures or gifts. Social graces also take root when children send thank you pictures and cards to those who have been kind to them.



The routine of meals together around a table provides many opportunities for kids to practice social graces. Create a meal-time atmosphere that allows conversation. It strengthens family rela-

tionships and develops manners children will put to good use when dining at a restaurant or friend's house.

Of course, teaching basic table manners is an ongoing experience at meals. Calmly remind kids you'll listen when they don't have food in their mouths. If your child points and grunts at food, matter-of-factly say, "Please tell me what you'd like and I'll pass it." If a child demands peas by yelling, candidly reply you're more eager to help when asked to pass food in a courteous voice.

Reinforcement and encouragement are valuable teaching tools. When a child is mannerly, comment on the specific behavior you want to encourage. When your child gives a helping hand, compliment their cooperation: "How courteous of you to hold the door open when I bring in groceries. Thanks, hon."



When children help with household chores, such as fixing supper, acknowledge their contribution. Express your appreciation when your child waits patiently after you've asked them not to interrupt a conversation.

Through these everyday experiences, children will gradually learn respectful manners - and many other wonderful traits will surface as well such as: kindness, helpfulness, patience, cooperation, thoughtfulness, politeness, consideration, honesty, selflessness, graciousness, compassion, empathy, and gentleness. Together they'll combine to give your child the skills necessary to participate more easily in family life and the life of the larger community.



Source: Karen Stephens, Exchange Everyday



# MSU EXTENSION PROGRAMS

For up-to-date info: [www.macombcountymi.gov/msuextension/events](http://www.macombcountymi.gov/msuextension/events)

## FAMILY (586) 469-5180

Jean Lakin, Family Resource Mgt Agent

### Alternatives to Anger

**4 week program**

*Wednesdays, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.*

*May 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th*

*MSU Extension*

*21885 Dunham Rd, Suite 12*

*Clinton Township, MI 48036*

**Call 586-469-7614 to register**

### Living with Less

*FREE workshop*

**Thursday, May 21, 09 @ 6:30 - 9:30p.m.**

*To be held at*

*Warner Education Center*

*2791 Kopper*

*Sterling Heights, MI 48310*

*(South of 15 between Ryan & Duquoin)*

**Call 586-469-7614 to register.**

### Taking Charge of Credit

**Dates:** *Tuesdays, May 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th*

**Time:** *6:30 to 8:30 p.m.*

**Location:** *MSU Extension Center*

*VerKuilen Building, 21885 Dunham Road*

*Clinton Township, MI 48036*

**Pre-registration is required.** *(For more information or to register for this free series, call 586-469-7614*

## HOUSING (586) 469-6430

Anne Lilla, Housing Program Coordinator

### Macomb Homebuyers

#### Affordable Housing Seminar

- Renting vs. Buying
- Government & Bank Loan Programs
- Down Payment Assistance
- Saving Money & Cleaning Up Credit

**Wednesday, Apr. 29, 2009**

**6:30-8:30pm**

to be held at Warren City Hall

**Call 586-469-6430 to register now!**

### Money Management

8 Sessions, Thursdays, 6:30 - 9:00 pm

Apr. 23, 30

May 7, 14, 21, 28

Jun. 4 & 11, 2009

*Leaps and Bounds*

*Mt. Calvary Community Center*

**Call (586) 469-6430 to register**

FREE! Sponsored by the City of Warren, Community Development Block Grant Program



### Home Ownership Seminar

**FREE Three-part program**

**April 8, 15, & 22, 2009**

**6:30 - 8:30 pm**

*To be held at:*

*Warren City Hall*

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Eileen Haraminac, EFNEP Agent

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- Menu Planning
- Group Presentation
- Stretch Your Food Dollars
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Parenting Views/Healthy Bites

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Calendar of upcoming events

Program descriptions

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Positive role modeling to at-risk youth 11 - 15  
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***NEW FREE CLASS BEING OFFERED!!***

Call 586-469-5180  
to register or for  
more information.



# Money Smart from the Start

Thursday, May 21, 2009

6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Macomb MSUE - Clinton Township

This FREE parent education session  
will help you teach your child age 3 - 8  
about the ins and outs of MONEY!



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