

## Keeping your cool

Last week I talked about the importance of parents taking time out for their own health and well being. This week is about using calming ideas to get through the days when your patience is stretched.

As a parent you probably have high expectations of yourself and on most days you do get through with a balance of patience, firmness and support for your children. However there will be days when things just don't go quite to plan. You may have had too little sleep or over slept, you're running late or you've forgotten something important. These are times when you have to work at staying calm.

Many parents have been through these times and have worked out some ideas to help you keep your cool on those tougher than usual days.

First of all work out the signs that you're getting tense. These could be things like clenching your jaw, feeling hot, thinking critical thoughts or simply noticing the frown on your face when you look in the mirror. The earlier you recognise this tension the quicker you can try a calming idea.

Secondly take a look at these simple but effective calming ideas and pick out the ones that suit you.

A good tension buster is counting to ten, start by slowly counting from one to ten then ask yourself " Am I calm?" if the answer is "No", keep counting until the answer is "Yes".

You could try phoning a friend at times of stress, getting your worries off your chest to a sympathetic friend can put things in perspective.

One idea is to take a break from a difficult situation. Switching your attention to something as simple as making yourself a cup of tea or taking a walk to the washing line and back can break up a tense moment.

Another way to relieve tension is to relax your muscles: take a deep breath then let it out slowly, then let your shoulders and jaw go loose, these are the places where tension is stored, so it can help if you practice relaxing them.

A pleasant way to let go of irritation is to remind yourself of some positive things about your family, pull out some of your child's baby photos or mementoes of happy times such as holidays. When you remember those good memories present day niggles can seem less important.

If you'd like parenting support and advice you could call Parentline Plus a free telephone line for parents on 0808 800 2222 or seek help from a trusted health professional.

Remember your children are learning how to keep calm and handle tensions from watching you. When you practice these ideas to keep your cool they will copy and cope better themselves when challenges come along.

**Parent's tips:**

Tracy, mother of Sophie, aged nine months, and Lauren, aged three from Fegg Hayes says: "To keep calm we get out of the house and go for a walk together."

Peter, grandfather of Millie, aged one, from Newcastle says: "I calm down by having a cup of tea and a quick sit down."



For more information on First Steps  
Psychological Service  
Please call 01782 425 883

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