



# Stress and Family Life

Stress is a reality that all families face, and the effects of stress can impede our functioning in all areas of life. Two factors determine whether stress in family life leads to a maladaptive response or to new learning that makes us more resilient for the future.

Garmezy & Rutter\* describe how the positive or negative impact of a stressful event depends on: 'the degree of interruption and disarray set into motion by the event; and the presence of psychological and physical buffers that regulate the harshness of the stressor.'

When stress is minor, we are able to re-balance with everyday coping skills. When a major stress event occurs, or stress accumulates over time, our psychological and physical resources may seem insufficient and our functioning as a family deteriorates.

Though family life stress is inevitable, we can take steps to reduce its negative impact on our emotions, rational thinking, parenting, work, and the important relationships in our life.

## Make a Plan to Reduce Stress

We can't control many of the major stressful events that affect our families, but we can plan changes that will prevent the accumulation of minor stressors. Family organization, delegation, routines, and rituals all disrupt the cycle of stress; and keep our family life in balance.

## Communicate Feelings

Social support is a key to positive coping with stress. Allow and encourage family members to talk about feelings during stressful times. Open communication makes your family a supportive foundation of positive adaptation to life stress.

## Seek Support in Your Network

It means so much to have a friend we can talk to when we are anxious and hurting. Take time to nurture friendships regularly so that 'busyness' doesn't get in the way of the relationships that sustain us in good times and bad.

Because serious stress affects our thinking and emotions, we often need outside counsel to get through the most stressful times. Friends, family, mentors, coaches, and counselors can help us process the emotions and conflicts. Then, we find the inner strength to see the steps we can take to resolve our stress in a way that brings hope to our family and teaches our children to be resilient in times of stress.

\*Norman Garmezy & Michael Rutter. Stress, coping, and development in children. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983. [cited in Wolfe, David A. Child Abuse: Implications for Child Development and Psychopathology. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999]

Source: Kimberly L. Keith; [www.about.com/parenting](http://www.about.com/parenting)

# Homemade Ice Cream

Milk can become ice cream in five minutes!

This homemade ice cream in a bag is a summertime delight for kids and adults alike.

## What you'll need:

- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 cup milk or half & half
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 6 tablespoons rock salt
- 1 pint-size Ziploc plastic bag
- 1 gallon-size Ziploc plastic bag
- Ice cubes

## How to make it:

- Fill the large bag half full of ice, and add the rock salt. Seal the bag.
- Put milk, vanilla, and sugar into the small bag, and seal it.
- Place the small bag inside the large one and seal again carefully.
- Shake until mixture is ice cream, about 5 minutes.
- Wipe off top of small bag, then open carefully and enjoy!

## Tips:

To make a larger amount, try doubling the recipe.

Anything larger might be too big for kids to pick-up, because the ice itself is quite heavy.

Source: [www.kaboose.com](http://www.kaboose.com)



# All Kids Need..... Gentleness

If your personality is a bit strong and bold...

If your job requires you to be very assertive...

If you are, by nature, very confident or intense...

Know that, at home, strength is often found in gentleness.

Don't be overzealous with reason. Even if your view seems most logical, emotions and feelings must also be considered.

Seek to affect change not through force or coercion, but by the gentle strength of example and leadership.

**Try it!** Try speaking to your child today in an especially warm and gentle tone.

Source: Zimmy's Guide to All Kids Need.



# Understanding Your Child's Behavior

All parents struggle with some of the things their children do. While there is no magic formula that will work in all situations, it is helpful to understand the kinds of issues that impact a child's behavior. If you understand these issues and know what to expect at different developmental stages, your reactions will be wiser and it will be easier to create an environment that supports and nurtures your child.



When your child's behavior is troubling, ask yourself:

## 1. Is this a growth or developmental stage?

Each new phase of growth or development brings challenges for the child and the child's caregivers. For example, growing independence in the child's second year is often accompanied by challenging behavior (such as the "No!" phase). Feeding and sleeping problems may occur during developmental transitions, and it helps if caregivers are extra patient and loving in their responses. It's best to give the child choices, use humor, and be firm but supportive.

## 2. Is this an individual or temperament difference?

Not all children of a certain age act the same way. Some progress developmentally at different rates, and all have their own temperaments that may account for differences in behavior. Being aware of a child's tendency to be shy, moody, adaptable, or inflexible will help you better understand the child's behavior in a specific situation and impact the way you approach the behavior.

## 3. Is the environment causing the behavior?

Sometimes the setting provokes a behavior that may seem inappropriate. An overcrowded living or childcare arrangement coupled with a lack of toys can increase aggression or spark jealousy. Look around your home to evaluate it in light of your child's behaviors and see the environment from a child's viewpoint.

## 4. Does the child know what is expected?

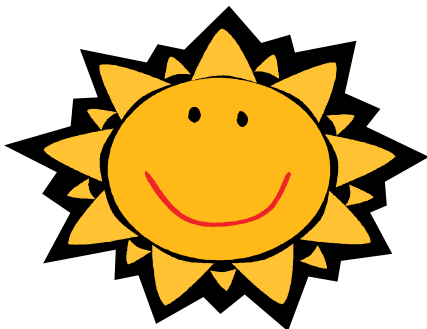
If a child is in a new or unfamiliar territory or is facing a new task or problem, he or she may not know what behavior is appropriate and expected. Perhaps this is the first time a two year-old without siblings has been asked to share a toy. Developmentally he does not truly understand the concept of sharing, so it is up to the parent to explain calmly how other children will react. Patience and repeating the message over and over again are necessary as children rarely learn or master a new response on the first try.

## 5. Is the child expressing unmet emotional needs?

Emotional needs that are unmet are the most difficult cause of behavior to interpret. If a particular child needs extra love and attention, rather than withhold that from her, it will be helpful to find ways to validate and acknowledge the child more frequently.

Adapted from Understanding Behavior: A Key to Discipline, National Association for the Education of YoungChildren and Judy Reinsberg, July 1999.

Source: [nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention/index.cfm](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention/index.cfm)



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Safe and Happy Summer from  
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## Internet Safety By Age: 7 to 10

During this period, children begin looking outside the family for social validation and information. This is when peer pressure begins to become an issue for many kids. It's also a time when kids are looking for more independence from parents, according to psychologist Richard Toft. During these years, children should be encouraged to do a bit more exploring on their own, but that doesn't mean that the parents shouldn't be close at hand. Just as you wouldn't send children at this age to a movie by themselves, it's important to be with them -- or at least nearby -- when they explore the Net. For this age group, consider putting the computer in a kitchen area, family room, den, or other areas where the child has access to Mom or Dad while using the computer. That way, they can be "independent" but not alone.

Also, consider using a filtering program or restricting them to sites that you locate via a child-safe search engine. Another option for this age group is a child-friendly browser.

When your child is at this stage, you need to be concerned not so much about what he's doing online and with the PC as how long he's spending on the PC. Be sure that his time on the computer and the Internet doesn't take away from all his other activi-

ties. Kids need variety, and it's not a good idea for them to be spending all of their time on any single activity, even reading books. One way to deal with this might be through the use of a software time-limiting tool. It's even important to be sure that they are varying what they do online. Encourage them to explore a variety of Web sites, not just one or two of their favorites.

Source: [getnetwise.org/safetyguide](http://getnetwise.org/safetyguide)

