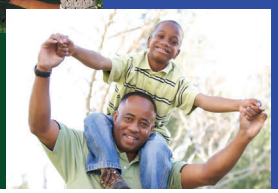

Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
June 2011

Stressed Out!

By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin ARW/FCARC

Stressed Out! It's a phrase we all know because we have all experienced the feelings associated with stress. However, for foster parents and relative caregivers, the stress in parenting someone with special needs, history of trauma, attachment issues, emotional and behavioral concerns, or history of multiple placements adds a whole new level to stress.

We all have different thresholds for stress. Some of us thrive on the excitement of having a high level of stress on a daily basis, while some of us find stress to be exhausting and something to be avoided at all costs. For whatever reason, if you find yourself too overcome by the stress in your life, here's some information that might help.

System Overload
Stress actually comes from having one or more problems at the same time. It's those feelings of being worried, anxious, scared, overwhelmed, and angry all at the same time. Some people say they know that they're stressed when they get a headache or have trouble sleeping, while others can feel trapped and angry. So what does stress do to our bodies?

- Your pupils dilate so you can see better.
- You breathe more rapidly from the upper part of your chest.
- Your heart rate increases because your heart is working harder.
- Your body releases stress hormones called adrenaline and cortisol, which give you more strength, energy, speed, and endurance.
- Your digestive system shuts down and you lose your appetite or get a dry mouth.
- You start to sweat and your hands and feet get cold and clammy.
- Your face gets flushed.

Fight or Flight
When you're stressed, your body kicks itself into high gear and goes into "fight or flight" mode. Back in the days of early history, stress actually helped people survive because problems usually meant life or death situations.

Nowadays, stress is that flood of emotions that you get, usually in the form of a natural ruse of stress hormones. Some of us find ourselves having a "fight" reaction by either getting angry or possibly becoming physical and fighting from the stress hormones. The other half of us have the opposite "flight" reaction and try to avoid the problem by escaping.

Stressed Decision Making
Most of the decisions you make when you're overly stressed probably aren't the best choices you can make. That's because your body is doing its best to alleviate the stress, even if that means making quick and poor decisions. The choices we make when we're overwhelmed are usually impulsive, popular, or the easiest (at the time!) solution. But as we all know, these decisions often make things worse in the end.

One Wisconsin parent says, "I'm forever telling my daughter 'Uh-oh! Today Sierra is making life difficult for Tomorrow Sierra again,' but I forget that I do the same thing."

What's Stressing You Out?
It could be something like your finances or a relationship issue. Parents have multiple issues going on at the time, which is probably making you feel even more stressed out. So how do you know exactly what's causing the stress?

Sometimes you already know, while other times you might need to calm yourself down enough to figure it out. If so, try to talk to someone you trust, write in your journal, exercise, or even just sit and breathe.

Here's a list of various things in no particular order that people find stressful in their daily lives.

- Relationships with family and friends
- Themselves
- Employment and employment changes
- Arguments
- Finances
- Gaining a new family member
- Death of spouse, child, family member , or a close family friend
- Changes in the health or behavior of a family member, including drug and alcohol problems
- Divorce or separation
- Changes in your living situation, like moving or remodeling
- Neighborhood or world problems
- Guilt

So What Can You Do?
Ironically, when we're stressed, most of us choose something that helps us the least with the stress. That's a normal reaction, but becoming more aware of it may help you make better choices. Next time you need some better options, take a look at this list of stress management skills.

Take Care of Your Body

- **Eat healthier.** Instead of going for comfort foods high in sugar, salt, caffeine or alcohol, get a cold glass of water and grab a piece of fruit.
- **Sleep more.** Many of us are busier than ever and do not get enough sleep. The average adult still needs seven to eight hours of sleep, in spite of the number of things on the parent "to do" list.
- **Get active.** Find something physical you like to do. Sometimes the easiest and most helpful thing is just to go for a walk. Getting physical helps your body release endorphins, which naturally make you feel better.

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Pre-Placement Training
for Prospective Foster Parents

Starting in March 2011 Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website:
http://www.wcwts.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training
We will then meet to discuss the learning points and to answer your questions.

Monday, June 20, 2011	**6-9 PM**
Thursday, July 21, 2011	**6-9 PM**

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room G137 in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.

Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and Family Division

In the past month, I had an opportunity to attend training on Engaging Absent Fathers sponsored by the Southern Child Welfare Training Partnership. Several of our staff attended and we discussed how and why it's important to include fathers in the lives of their children. The presenter highlighted some research data and the impact of fathers on children such as:

1. Nonresident father's involvement with their children is associated with a higher likelihood of reunification and quicker discharge from foster care.
2. Children with higher involvement with nonresident fathers were discharged from foster care more quickly.
3. Nonresident father's involvement is associated with a substantial lower likelihood of subsequent maltreatment allegations.
4. Children with highly involved nonresident fathers have shorter case lengths than children whose nonresident fathers were less involved or not involved.
   (Source: More about Dads: Exploring Associations between Nonresident Father involvement and Child Welfare Case Outcomes, 2008. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.)

According to our trainer, there is a fair amount of research on the positive influences fathers can have. One of the most important influences a father can have on their child is indirect and it's the quality of their relationship with the mother of the child. Even from birth, children who have an involved father are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident, and have better social connections with peers. Children with involved and caring fathers have better educational outcomes. One study of school aged children found that children with good relationships with their fathers were less likely to experience depression, exhibit disruptive behavior or to lie and were more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior. (Source: Wilcox & Rosenberg. (2006) The importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children, User Manual Series. Office of Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Children's Bureau)

With this additional information, where do we go from here? For those children who are placed in foster care, it's very important that we work to engage the fathers and share these positive outcomes with them. I also think it's important that we inform fathers of this research and reinforce the importance and value of their involvement with their child regardless of whether they want their child placed with them or not. I think fathers have a significant impact on the development and health of their children. With this research information, we will continue to enhance our efforts to reach out to fathers!

I would like to thank the Oakwood Church for working with Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator, in organizing our Foster Parent Clothing Closet. It looks wonderful! I want to thank the volunteers who spent a lot of time organizing the room and building the wooden racks (and securing them) so we can hang up to 3 sets of clothes on each rack. Shari gave me the tour, and I was impressed with the layout and it didn't seem as crowded or cluttered as before; good work! I hear the plan is to create a space in the Clothing Closet for children to try on clothes right there. That sounds like a good idea to me. Great work!

As the school year is ending, please let us know if you need any information about summer camps, respite, recreational opportunities, etc. We'd be more than happy to share this information so that the children have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Just a reminder to all foster parents regarding our Appreciation Event on July 13, 2011 from 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Milwaukee County Zoo which will once again be sponsored by Jack Safro Toyota. I look forward to seeing you there this year.

Happy Father's Day to all of our foster Dads.

Jesse

Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café Host Training

June 16, 2011
5:45 to 8:45 PM
Center for Excellence
N4W22000 Bluemound Road
Waukesha
Child Care and a light dinner will be provided.

Training

Parents Place Programs
262-549-5575
www.ppacinc.org

Prices for some classes may apply. Call 262-549-5575 to register. Free pre-registered childcare is available while attending most classes. Space is limited.

Calming the Explosive Volcano
Tuesdays, June 14 - 28
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
This course will teach you how to deal more effectively with angry, explosive and defiant children. You will learn what the "magic wand" of parenting is, and three specific skills for using it to calm and reduce the explosions and tantrums.

Emotion Coaching
Mondays, June 13 - 27
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Unacceptable child behaviors are often fueled by strong emotions. This class helps parents learn to positively influence behaviors by relating more effectively to those strong feelings.

Bullying (For parents and youth)
Mondays, June 6 & June 13
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Help your child develop skills that can prevent them from being bullied or becoming a bully.

Solving The Toddler Tantrums
Wednesdays, June 22 & 29
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Practical strategies to solve the tantrums, bedtime battles, "Mine!" and "No!" fights, biting and more. Learn effective discipline skills communication with your child and developing responsibility in your child.

Waukesha County Human Services and Jack Safro Toyota Present Foster Parent Appreciation Event

"An Afternoon with the Animals"
July 13, 2011
2:00 to 8:00
Milwaukee County Zoo
The Old Style Terrace
See you there!
RESERVE YOUR SPOT BY CALLING
SHARI RATHER @ 262-548-7267

Any foster parents or children who have special talents are invited to participate in the talent show! Start practicing and show off your skills! Free picnic dinner, music throughout the day, arts & crafts, and face painting are just some of the fun things planned!

Happy Father's Day
all of our Foster Dads!

Happy Father's Day
to all of our Foster Dads!

Stressed Out!
Continued from Page 1

Mind Your Mind
Be assertive and communicate more effective. Assertiveness is a kind of confidence and lets others know what you want in an honest and respectful way. When you're assertive, you tend to feel better about your relationships, more in control and more relaxed.

> Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. And RESPONSE is something we can choose.
>
> ~ Maureen Killoran

Make an action plan and set some short and long term goals. An easy way to do this is to think of a goal, then think of the steps you need to get there, who will help you, and a date when you want to complete your goal.

Are you short on time? If so, some time management skills might help you out. You can use a calendar, set priorities, and make "to do" lists. Find out what your biggest time wasters are and then limit the time you spend on those activities.

Decision making is something that sounds so easy, but can be really hard when you're stressed. Think of three choices then talk to someone or write them down. It also helps to think about possible consequences ahead of time.

Feelings Matter
Being positive and finding humor are two things that really help when you're stressed. Think of five things that you're thankful for and then write them down.

What's funny to you? Find an activity that makes you laugh. Is it a video on *YouTube* or watching your favorite movie.

When you're in a rut, try something new. Maybe you're scared of failing at something or consider yourself a perfectionist. Learn how to forgive yourself and have small expectations when you try something new.

Relax and Reach Out
Ever just need a break? Sometimes a relaxing activity can really help. Find something you love to do that also relaxes you like:

- Listening to music
- Playing sports
- Fixing your house
- Restoring a car
- Making crafts
- Singing, dancing and/or acting
- Doing Yoga and other relaxation exercises
- Making art
- Baking or cooking
- Watching a movie
- Scrapbooking
- Sewing
- Journaling
- Getting active: walking, swimming, biking, joining a gym, etc.
- Taking a bath or a nap
- Talking to your friends
- Praying or meditating
- Hiking, camping, fishing and/or hunting

> Stress can come from just about anywhere, including being overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, and yes, even anxiousness. What is stressful to one person may not be stressful to someone else.
>
> Anxiety, on the other hand is a feeling of fear. You may not even know why you're afraid. It's possible that you have an anxiety disorder, and not just everyday stress. Anxiety disorders include general anxieties, specific fears, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and other fears.
>
> Stress tends to be situational, whereas anxieties tend to be persistent. If you think you may have an anxiety disorder, talk to your doctor or a therapist.

Find your calm center by thinking of some place or activity where you'd really like to be and then imagine yourself there. Focus on your breathing and take three long, deep breaths.

Just need someone to talk to? You're not alone - many of us need help from our support system when we're stressed.

Personal Beliefs
When sometimes in the midst of stress, our own guiding center of beliefs becomes lost in the mix and loses the priority that it once had. If you find that your beliefs play an important role in your life, take time to reprioritize them. You need that sense of comfort.

Create a Self Care Action Plan
It's normal for most foster parents to get stressed out, but if you notice that your stress isn't going away or increases, create a self care action plan. Things like caring for yourself and putting yourself back on the top of the "to do" list can really help. Self care for you and your family includes respite, asking for help and support, and/or seeing a mental health or medical professional.

If you know that there's something really tough going on in your life and feel like you need help, don't wait until it gets worse, ask for the help and support you need now. To read more about self care, please read our tip sheet http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/library/310/SelfCare2.pdf

Tomorrow is a New Day
Whether the stress in your life was just from a busy, hectic day or whether the stress has been ongoing and long term, we all know that tomorrow is a new day.

Sometimes just knowing that there are things you can do and people to help support can provide a sense of comfort. Also try to find what works best to alleviate stress for yourself and change your perspective when possible. Who knows, in 20 years you may be laughing at something that found to be an extremely stressful experience or event yesterday.

Books on the Nightstand
By Becky Burmester

I'm still reading but at the moment I am concentrating on hair (more specifically the African-American hair on the heads of my children) and children's self-esteem issues. Rita is 5 years old and Shawn is seven. Neither one care about the color of their hair but they definitely have ideas about how they want their hair to look. Quite honestly the want "white" hair. Shawn wants bangs and his God-given hair is totally unsuited for bangs. Rita would like her hair either in a pony tail or long and swinging and her hair is like her brother's, kinky. What's a parent (cross-cultural parent) to do? I hit the bookshelves and the bookstores with a vengeance.

No Lye
First off my bookshelf was *No Lye!* by Tulani Kinard. I have owned this book for years. I bought it on the advice of a cross-cultural (white) mom who had found it helpful. The book was the tipping point in favor of locking her daughter's hair. The results were attractive and the child who struggled with sensory integration issues was less stressed when her hair was lower maintenance. I reread large sections and admired the gorgeous pictures and decided to seek more help. *No Lye!* has excellent information about the care and styling of black hair for those seeking to go natural. My black friends borrowed the book and said it was great.

But, I was uncomfortable with how adult the styles in the book were. The how to of shampooing, conditioning, drying, and combing were covered thoroughly. But this all-thumbs mom needed more help.

Wavy, Curly, Kinky
Wavy, Curly, Kinky by Deborah R. Lilly seemed promising with its cover photo of child and adult and a blurb that promised "hundreds of care tips, techniques and styles for newborns to teens." This is a book to share with your children. The book is divided into sections by age group and sex. There are lots of pictures for both parent and child to consider.

And, how are my children wearing their hair? Rita is wearing her hair primarily in braids, with mom putting it into twists when we can't get a time with the friend that braids it for us. Rita still wishes that she could wear her hair down, but she likes the compliments she gets when it is braided. Shawn is wearing his hair pretty short after trying to grow it longer. He has some sensory integration issues and found combing out his longer hair painful and his parents refused to let him go out with matted hair. His hair is short but his head is not shaved and for now that is our compromise.

You Be Me I'll Be You
Hair down and self-esteem to go! *You Be Me I'll Be You* by Pili Mandelbaum is a delightful picture book addressing the issues of differences in hair and skin across racial lines. Most of the time our two children are inclined to want our skin to be brown like theirs. This book is a discussion starter for the issue of accepting and liking who you are.

Loved Best
Loved Best by Patricia C. McKissack is a chapter book that we have just begun reading as a family. Carolyn is the oldest of three children and as the story begins she is positive she is loved best because she is the oldest. T he chapters are brief but the message of loving all children in a family is highlighted in each chapter. The illustrations by Felicia Marshall are lovely black and white drawings. This book is brief enough to be read at a single setting, but we are reading two chapters nightly to extend the time we spend talking about loving each other as individuals and not loving one person more than another.

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Foster Parent Annual Meeting
May 12, 2011

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor
Jen Barcus..... 262-542-2926
David Mersfelder 262-542-2926
Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
Relative Licensing
262-548-7272

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

Libby Sinclair
Relative Licensing
262-548-7277

April 2011 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
36 Children

Treatment Foster Care:
16 Children

Group Homes:
5 Children

Residential Care Facilities:
9 Children

Relative Placements:
60 Children

Relative Foster Homes:
80 Homes

Regular Foster Homes:
108 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other Counties
21 Homes

For Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Support, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627

Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler 262-548-7265
Bob Alioto 262-548-7262
Kate Flansburg 262-896-6857
Maria Maurer 262-548-7345
Susan Peck..... 262-548-7348
Janis Ramos..... 262-896-8069
Michael Reed..... 262-548-7347
Cindie Remshek 262-548-7639
Greg Rewolinski 262-548-7270
Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349
Kim Sampson 262-548-7273
Mark Sasso..... 262-548-7346
Linda Senger 262-548-7698
Deanna Stevlingson . 262-896-8570
Rick Wimmer..... 262-548-7359

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov And follow the links to foster care.

Jack Safro
Toyota•Ford•Lincoln•Mercury
Lexus•Infiniti•Scion