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Christian Parenting: Stress Survival Guide

Christian Parenting: Stress Free Survival Guide

This e-book is a guide based on Christian preaching and values and will offer stress relieving tips for families whilst making suggestions about teachings of the scriptures that you can contemplate on during the busy and stressful times.

The research and guidance in terms of parenting are unique to this book and will contribute to raising children and positive parenting, developing skills and effective parenting as well as helping you to obtain a holistic understanding of parenting and the affects of stress.

Introduction

Being a parent can at times be stressful for most parents. We can have conflict with our children, partners and extended family members which can seem insurmountable and intensive and leave us feeling inadequate as parents. People may be involved with our lives who may blame us for what they see are our inadequacies. We will often blame ourselves for what we see are issues beyond our control.

This is a significant issue affecting millions of people in families at sometime or other in our lives. As Christian families you will want to follow Jesus and Gods teaching in times of troubles.

Where ever you are in your family cycle, just starting out or seeing children through the transition into adulthood, you will find this book of value.

Whatever your situation, you will have experienced some level of stress within your parenting and wanting to do something about it will strengthen your family and create a great situation for your children and you to thrive in.

Parenting issues may include many of the following: feelings of anger, depression, uncontrollability, disturbance, mental exhaustions and stress.

You may be suffering from physical symptoms, such as sweating and palpitations. Inevitably, you begin to feel out of control and it is all about doom and gloom in your world.

Sometimes you think you are getting it right and then it all seems to fall apart. This is why you have obtained this book.

Within 'Christian Family Parenting: Stress Free Survival Guide', you will discover how to use stress relieving techniques to create a life which gives you access to building a successful family life, personal wellbeing and the proud feeling of being a parent, not just surviving but thriving.

This guide will provide you with genuine stress and anxiety reducers when you need them in order to feel satisfied with your role as a parent and to contribute to your wellbeing.

Parents like others need a chance to feel powerful, relaxed, and nurtured by participating and having access to the appropriate stress-relieving tools to promote and assist their parenting.

You will be encouraged to make significant changes in how you manage and deal with the impacts of modern day parenting, and to share information and advice.

Although we have extensive experience in child development and creating good outcomes for children this guide is not meant to be a "how to parent effectively" book, it is intended to give a Christian understanding and response to the effects of parenting on care givers.

If you require child rearing tools there are a wealth of literature on timeless parenting skills, but a limited amount of practical information on how parents can take care of themselves holistically within the process.

We have run successful training and written guidance for workers, care givers and parents for many years. We have knowledge and extensive experiences and expertise in child care, management training, wellbeing, and health issues.

We have put together effective stress-relieving programs for parents that are being hailed as fantastically unique and which will reduce your anxiety about parenting.

This information in this guide is not reliant on finances to be successful and so it is relevant for parents at any economic level and educational achievement.

You have bought this guide because you want continual and lasting stress and anxiety reduction. A halting of the pressures and anxieties which you have found associated with being a parent. The book can be used as a reference book, for new or existing carers and parents, practised every day or just when you need it.

As parents we will have peaks and troughs with our parenting. By using these resources you will be better prepared to deal with these challenges.

If you invest in your own and your family's future then that investment will grow as long as you are nurturing it. This attitude to investment shows you how not to just use up your resources but invest in your family long term and short term. Not only do you benefit but other people benefit too.

Many people like you discover that the condition of stress associated with being a parent when they arise are short-lived after they use our services.

We would encourage you to get appropriate help if things do not seem better or if anyone in your family is in crisis or at risk of harm. This guide is not intended to take the place of any advice given by professionals involved with you or your family.

On the next page is my favourite reading concerning being a parent from the Bible; I have faith that you will find your own favourite reading and at the end of this guide you are encouraged to do so and keep it visible for your whole family to enjoy and to guide you.

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Amour Vincit Omnia: Love Conquers All

1 Corinthians 13 World English Bible

“If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but don't have love, I have become a sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing. If I dole out all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, it profits me nothing.

Love is patient and is kind; love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will be done away with. Where there are various languages, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is complete has come, then that which is partial will be done away with. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known. But now faith, hope, and love remain--these three. The greatest of these is love.”

This guide is based on 5 assets which will run through out what we show you

Awareness:

- Be aware of what triggers your stress and how you respond to things
- Be truthful and honest to yourself and look at what life choices you are making
- Honour your word to yourself and God about how you will alleviate your stress.

Care:

- Allow people to contribute to you
- Use people appropriately as structures, resources and networking
- Build in everyday structures that take care of you through the church.
- Look at what is or is not working to alleviate your stress
- Take actions when you need to
- Reward yourself in positive ways.

Goals:

- Declare what your goals are and undertake daily prayers
- Keep possibilities in existence by committing to goals.
- Share your goals so that you and others know how you will take care of yourself
- Keep your declarations and promises alive.

Celebration of being a parent

- Reconnecting with what makes you who you are
- Listing your achievements
- Being proud of yourself
- Putting right what you may have made wrong.

- Invest in your family life
- Give to others

Belief in God the Almighty and Faith in the power of Jesus Christ as your Saviour is the final Asset which has automatically been given to you as a Christian and goes hand in hand with all of the other Assets.

What follows is how to practise these 5 Assets, and how to keep them alive in your life, so that you can experience change in relation to stress in your parenting role, create well-being in your family, and reduce anxiety.

Psalm 23 The Lord is my Shepherd

Contemplate on this psalm, think about God our Father and consider what kind of parenting style you have?

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake,

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Some say that The Twenty-third Psalm is one of the most powerful pieces of writing in existence, and that it can do wonderful things for anyone who reads it especially if you read it on a daily basis, with remarkable results.

- Give yourself some time to think about the verses and consider where you are as a family, as a parent, and what stresses are leading to prevent you from achieving happiness in your family.
- Don't just go through the motions and chant it quickly. Instead, think about each phrase, giving your mind-time to soak up as much of the meaning as possible.
- Now look at the following types of parenting style and consider which one best fits with the psalm and how you would like to raise your family in a stress free environment.

Authoritative: This style is when parents try to be in control and are strict without much expression of warmth and affection. They can be very critical of their children when the children are not able to meet their high standards. Little choice is offered to children and they tell children what to do.

Authoritarian: When parenting like this, children are not helped to learn about why they need to do things and there is focus on bad behaviour and not good behaviour with punishment being harsh if rules are not followed.

Permissive: This way of parenting lets children take control and does not provide many rules or clear boundaries. There is no difference seen between good or bad behaviour. All behaviours are accepted with warmth and affection

Democratic; This style helps children learn, it focuses on praising good behaviour but does not over harshly punish or continuously criticise bad behaviour. The use of rewards, respect and clear boundaries with clear communication is clearly seen in this style.

At any time you can go back to the 23rd Psalm and consider your parenting style, practice this over and over again.

On the following pages you will find information from research which we have undertaken with parents over many years. We have put together a list of some of the top issues which affect them.

Consider which stressors relate to you or have related to you in the past. You may have ones which we have not listed.

Examples of some stressors in the parenting role

- Circle those that are occurring for you and your family then make your own list

Some examples

Providing Physical Security: Home, shelter, food, clothing, pocket money

Providing Physical development: dealing with behaviour, play, healthy lifestyle

Helping children with school work, not liking their friends and those they are mixing with.

Providing Emotional security: Your children do not feel safe because of what is going on in your family or around them

Providing Emotional development: children are

Providing Cultural identity

Marital conflict

Work life balance

Conflict with teenagers

Dependency and independence

- **List what your stresses are:**

You probably identified with many of the issues listed as stressors impacting on parents.

As you went through them, you may even have remembered some of the actual events and times when these things impacted on you as stressful situations. You may have to face them currently.

An important thing to consider from now on is that you are not alone. You may be thinking that there is something wrong with you as no one else seems to suffer stress as you do, but there are countless numbers of parents with similar experiences as you.

Considering yourself as weak or similar is just a disempowering conversation which you are having with yourself. The strength that you should get from this exercise is that there are many parents who are addressing their needs in terms of raising their children appropriately. They are building a common understanding, a shared network of support and utilising available techniques to look after themselves with the faith that they have within the teachings of Jesus and the words of the Lord.

What are your values and what are your values about being a family?

Are they inherited or are they yours. Seek advice from the leaders in your church concerning appropriate child rearing and verses in the bible which will give you guidance on dealing with these issues.

The effects of stress

Some parents find their parental role so stressful that they begin to suffer from the effects of stress. It is important that as part of your own self awareness you understand how stress is impacting on you and consequently on your parenting role and wellbeing. It is a bit like a vicious circle.

A Brief biochemical overview

Your fear responses are regulated by the part of your brain called the Amagdala. If the Amagdala becomes overactive due to the warnings of stress, it sends out highly charged emotions.

Your brain holds your memories in your hippocampus and if you are constantly stressed, then all your fears become supercharged and your body reacts to protect you. If you are facing a stressful situation which reignites that part of the brain where yours fears are, then it can become a big issue for your body. Your adrenal glands start pumping out cortisone and adrenaline. They elevate your blood pressure and prepare your body for a 'fight or flight' response. Clinically, it is agreed that cortisone acts as an immune suppressant, hence the correlations between stress and illness. Also, the hormones you produce from the stress reaction go into your blood stream and fats start solidifying and floating around your body in an attempt to protect you.

If your sympathetic system i.e. your adrenal gland has become over-activated by stress, and if your family have a predisposition to weakness in, say, the heart or liver (you may be weak there and) there is a possibility that this is where illnesses may appear for you.

The wellbeing packages and techniques incorporated in this guide will definitely trigger a healing process in your body, mind, and spirit.

As your body heals, you will get stronger, and this will enable you to deal with your stressful situation in the work place in a powerful way. Once you choose to apply it, you find that it's not another burden – it's part of your everyday life and you will achieve great results.

You will then have the ability to choose a future from this position of greater power than you may have been in when you were still in the grips of the effects of stress. As you progress and utilise the techniques offered in the guide, you will obtain results which expand your potential for choices, ensuring that you achieve success, career progression, and even financial freedom.

What do we mean when we talk about stress?

Here are some useful definitions:

Stress

n. pressure or tensions, quantity measuring this; demand on physical or mental energy, distress caused by this

Stressful

a. causing stress

Distress

n. anguish or suffering caused by pain, sorrow, worry or exhaustion; state of difficulty or helplessness

Key words: Pressure, anxiety, worry, nervous, hassle, trauma, tension, burn out

Whatever you are feeling, it is only you who really knows how this is impacting on your health and wellbeing, your efficiency, your family, and your career.

Self awareness is the first step to building a powerful existence for yourself. Many people think that this might mean years of therapy, gazing at yourself. We believe that the process of self awareness through therapeutic intervention has a vital role to play in workers' lives. The process itself is a continuum which will enrich your sense of wellbeing for all of your life.

We consider your responses to triggers or to stimuli as a very important indicator of self awareness. This process underpins how effectively you are able to deal with your stress in the work place. So we start with this, but appreciate that you will find that there are many therapeutic interventions appropriate to understand the 'why' of things. At this moment, we are only interested in the 'how' of things, followed by empowering actions to get you to a state of wellbeing.

You have things that stimulate you and trigger responses which may make you act in a certain way.

Identify your stressors: What do you think your triggers and responses are?

With regard to stress, it is essential that you identify what is making you respond to situations in your parental role in certain ways.

This is powerful knowledge because by being as fully conscious as possible about what makes you tick, you can become familiar with how you work and be in control of the process.

Some of us actually find it really hard to enter into this process of self awareness, because what can happen is the feelings in our bodies when we remember the

stresses actually seem real as if the situation is happening. Stick with it though, and take a break if you feel uncomfortable.

An Example:

When my teenager says to me she will do the washing up later I get very upset as I just cooked the dinner and I know she will forget to do it and I will have to do it myself. I remind her that she said that last time and did not wash up the dishes. She storms out of the room and I feel inadequate.

You're getting the idea.

This is called a response to stimulus, the result is something negative for you and we call it Stress in the Work Place.

An Exercise:

Spend at least 20 minutes looking at examples of your own.

Triggers and responses: anxious parents

These days, stressors are more likely to be emotional or mental than physical, but our bodies respond to the stress in the same way. With emotional stress, we can't resolve it by fighting it or running away. We get frustrated, and grab a cup of coffee or chocolate, and keep going. Not so much 'fight or flight', but stew and chew.

Continual stress will wear our bodies out. It affects our immune system, increases our susceptibility to illness, and slows down the healing process. When you are under prolonged stress, your body needs more nutrients, but stress interferes with digestion and impairs the absorption of nutrients.

Many of us as caring parents may take on whatever trauma our children have experienced as well as our concern about what may happen to them during the day. We see the news on the latest tragedies, we hear about Jonnie who was in Claire's class at school who is now on drugs, we hear about abductions and alcohol abuse almost every day. We listen, support, and we validate our children feelings and their experience. We offer them an experience to let go of their burden. As parents we can't help but take in some of the emotional pain our children leave us with.

The most important thing to do is to acknowledge that it will affect you. Recognising that it is normal to be affected is the most important coping skill that you can give to yourself.

We must find a healthy balance to cope with stressful times.
How stressed are you?

Stress Awareness Exercise

Spend at least 10 minutes thinking about how stressed you are?

Fear of the future

Now decide on three areas of your life that you would like to prioritise concerning your stress. But consider them in the context of the three areas we have given below, these are areas you want to work on which will make a real difference to you.

1. Success in an area of your life you choose – for example, nutrition or fitness
2. Helping your children develop age appropriate skills – for example helping your teenager learn to cook a meal
3. Using your finances wisely to benefit to your wellbeing, for example, not spending all of your leftover money on quick fixes to make you feel better.

Write them down:

- 1.
 - 2.
- 17

3.

Then enter into an agreement with yourself and God to complete this work in order to increase your wellbeing.

An Example of Your working agreement

I, [your name]

declare that I will work on these 3 areas in relation to stress in my life:

1. This area is to do with my success in the areas of

2. This is to do with my child's development.....

3. This is to do with my finances.....

Signed:

Date:

Place this agreement somewhere so that you can see it every day. Try keeping it as a screen saver!

Summary

- Stress has various definitions and there is no one way of dealing with it
- In order deal with stress, you need to be aware of what triggers your stress and be aware of what your responses are to stress
- When stress is triggered in your body, you may experience physical signs of illness, especially if you have a weakness to certain illnesses
- Stress affects many areas of your life and your awareness is now being raised
- You are becoming more aware of just how much your responses to stress and the impact on you and others is affecting your life
- You will now begin to see how stress has been holding you back in the areas of your success, career progression, financial freedom and parenting
- You can now began to look at priorities which you wish to work on in the areas of your choosing
- You have now agreed to make a commitment to look at theses priority areas in your life.
- You are more aware of how the scriptures can help you to become the most incredible parent God intended you to become

Family members are all important

Parents are members of families and people in families need the same things which generally are:

- Access to education and opportunities to learn
- Respect and understanding
- To feel safe and secure
- To feel happy and healthy
- Praise and encouragement
- Strategies to deal with difficult issues
- Clear rules and boundaries
- Appropriate expectations

Many parents are not good at looking at their own self care in relation to being part of a family and at times feel that their needs are neglected and this can lead to resentments.

As a parent you should consider that you are not being selfish if you consider the above list applies to you too, and that creating a family situation which meets everyone's needs will relieve your stress in the short and long term.

Self care involves you:

- Building in everyday structures that take care of you
- Allowing people to contribute to you
- Obtaining support from people appropriately
- Embracing structures and resources which will help you.

Work through all of the exercises in this chapter as they will result in ensuring you create powerful structures which you build in every day to being a parent. Change your day and assemble a self-care organisation around you which aids you to

participate in stress alleviation practices. You will begin to develop a sound infrastructure of helpful stress resources structures and receive input from people in your life who will aid your stress relieving techniques.

What can I do to improve my stress levels?

Practise stress alleviation

Use stress busters throughout the day to stop stress building up.

Stand up, take a deep breath in while raising your shoulders to your ears, drop your shoulders as you breathe out. Do this 2 or 3 times. Rotate your shoulders backwards 3 times and then forwards 3 times.

Pay attention to your breathing. It is very common to hold your breath when you're concentrating – this can lead to headaches.

If you think you are suffering from prolonged stress, you need to work on the things that make you stressed such as your nutritional status, your exercise, and relaxations.

There are different kinds of things to get stressed or worried about. There are the things that you can change, and there are ones you have to learn to live with.

Improve your nutritional status by eating a well-balanced diet.

Make sure you are getting enough vitamins and minerals everyday by eating five portions of fruit and vegetables.

Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water every day.

You should avoid stress creating foods such as processed foods, artificial sweeteners, junk food, carbonated drinks, chocolate, fried foods, sugar, and white flour products.

Alcohol, tobacco and mood-altering drugs may offer a temporary relief from stress, but they do nothing to address the problems and they can harm your health.

Any type of aerobic exercise raises your heart rate – walking, jogging, running – will keep stress under control, so long as it is regular.

Simple relaxation breaks to fit into your day

Whilst you are in bed contemplating whether to spend an extra 5 minutes snuggled up with your duvet, try stretching your body awake with the following exercise. Gently breathe in and lift your right knee to your chest. Let your other leg stay straight on the mattress. Place both hands on your shin and as you breathe, allow your knee to come closer to your body. Keeping hold of your shin, point your toes back and forth as you breathe; next, focus your awareness on your big toe, rotate your ankle five times in one direction; then repeat in the opposite direction. Release your hands from your shin, straighten your leg and repeat this exercise with your other leg.

Still in bed? Now's the time to wake up your back by giving yourself a gentle back massage. Hug both knees to your chest, curl up into a small ball, inhale as you rock forward and exhale as you rock back. Have fun and vary the speed at which you rock. When you are ready, rock up to sit comfortably, or you can choose to roll to your side and use your hands to sit upright.

When you start the day, before plunging straight into your work, sit quietly, place your hands on your thighs, make sure your back is straight and shoulders relaxed: gently breathe in for a count of four, and breathe out slowly for a count of four. Do this 3 to 7 times. As time permits, inhale for a count of four, hold the breath for a count of four, and slowly exhale for a count of four. Practise this 3 to 7 times, then return to normal breathing.

Massage your ears. Sitting comfortably, straight spine, feet flat on the floor, gently 'walk' your fingers around your ear lobes, gently pulling your ears as massage the ear. Repeat 3 to 5 times in each direction.

Roll your shoulders forward and backwards in circles as if touching your ears. Repeat 3 to 5 times in both directions.

Sit still or lie down comfortably and close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath, without any intention of changing it in any way. Just 'watch' what it does. It will adjust without conscious effort.

Exercises to reduce neck and shoulders tension

Many people hold tension in their necks and shoulders, leading to stiffness, poor posture, and tension headaches. Repeat these exercises to release tension, increase flexibility and tone the muscles. Keep your body soft and gentle, your spine straight, neck relaxed, and shoulders facing forwards

Remember to breathe slowly and with awareness as you exercise.

Drop your head to your chest, breath in as you lift your head to look forward, and then breathe out as you drop your head backwards. Repeat 3 to 7 times.

Keeping your head erect, turn it all the way to the right, back to the centre, then all the way to the left. Repeat 3 to 7 times each direction.

Raise your right shoulder, and then drop it down. Repeat with the left. Repeat 3 to 7 times each shoulder.

Raise both shoulders at once, then drop them down again. Again, repeat 3 to 7 times.

Finally, link your fingers together and stretch your arms high above your head.

Breathing to de-stress:

Sitting comfortably on your chair, feet flat on the floor, straight spine, hands resting on your thighs.

Close your eyes, relax your face.

Keep the shoulders relaxed as you breathe in for a count of four, then hold the breath for a count of four, and then exhale slowly for a count of four. Repeat this breathing practice 4 to 7 times, and then return to normal breathing.

God is a major source for helping you to deal with stress and there are lots of scriptures in the Bible to deal with many situations. Meditate and ask God for guidance whilst undertaking these exercises.

I hope you enjoyed your 'relaxation break'. As with any form of physical exercise, please consult your Medical Practitioner before embarking on an exercise programme.

Putting nurturing circles and sound structures around you and your family

Put the people and organisations in the places that support you and your family. Identify areas where there are gaps in your support structures and think about how you can increase your network of support.



Eco map

Use an eco map to find out what your support networks are and who are important in their lives. It will help you to see what areas of their lives are lacking in support or

networks and will identify future work. Eco maps can be used on different areas such as looking at family supports, friendships through church, work, interests, etc. Ask for help where you need to and try to accept it if you can and it is right for you.

Jesus told his followers to ask, seek and knock to get the things they needed: **See**

Matthew 7

It will give you a good visual tool to use and to go back over if situations change.

Place yourself in the middle and use symbols to link yourself to others.

- Thick line in dark means stronger relationship
- Curvy red line means that the relationship is stressful
- Arrows pointing to you mean that the system is influencing you
- Arrows pointing both ways means that you influence that person and they influence you.

An Exercise

Look at **1 and 2 Chronicles** which are about family roots. The tracing of roots are very helpful for families to do together and will show you who is in your family and how they are important to you.

Engage your children in devising a family tree.

Conflict Resolution for easier family functioning

Too many people are unaware that their involvement with conflict within the family can take a heavy toll on them if not tackled early enough.

Once you get caught up in a conflict situation, this can be soul destroying, and can even lead to family disruption. Your family may have a view of you which is held behind your back and which can affect your parenting. You may not be trusted. It really doesn't even matter if you are right or wrong.

You really need to do some work on this if you are one of the people who seem to be stressed by conflict in the home.

Conflict resolution Do's and Don'ts:

- Resolve conflict in yourself and much of it elsewhere will resolve itself.
- Avoid gossip or negative conversations.
- Encourage positive conversations in your home and in front of your children
- When possible, 'nip things in the bud'. If you've got in the habit of having constructive conversations this will be easier to do, and the person you are talking to will be more inclined to listen to what you have to say.
- Try to identify what type of problem is causing the conflict. If the conflict involves something practical, try some basic problem solving with yourself and others to find a solution; if the problem is something more personal, or involves beliefs about what is right or wrong, you may need to go deeper, which requires more personal communication.
- When actually brokering a conflict within your family, especially one that has become serious and your family members have become entrenched in their opinions, try to get both parties to 'hear' the other person's story or point of view. This may take some time as parties often need time to reflect on what they have said and especially what they have heard. Do not hesitate to have 2

or 3 meetings, or ongoing meetings. It may take quite a long time if parties have grown to strongly dislike one another.

- If you are in a conflict, try to be aware of your emotions and triggers, what causes them and, ideally, 'where they come from'. The more you understand these things, the more control you'll have over your life. Try to understand the other person's point of view, background, or experience. Gather support, but don't try to take sides.
- With others in conflict: remember constructive conversations. Assume a role of balance that doesn't mean you don't have an opinion, but the projection here is that you'd like the conflict resolved fairly.

*“And be ye kind one to another, tender- hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake” **Ephesians 4:32***

Family Group Conference, a family reunion with a difference

Ephesians 3: 14 – 16 King James Version

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

Family Group Conferences are based on resolving issues in families. All family members get together and they can even have a mediator who helps them resolve the issues which are going on in the family at any one time. You could also set up a reunion with a difference, one that family gets together to get the wisdom from older or experienced family members. The idea is to get everyone together in a safe place and with respect come up with appropriate problem solving, it is not for people to take the law into their own hands or pass judgment on others.

Have a good pamper!

There are many health and wellbeing organisations and therapists, naturopaths and spas that you can choose from to help you gain relaxation and relief of stress.

Respite

Have you built into your parenting life respite which will aid your development as a parent? This can range from babysitting to taking a short break whilst leaving your family in the hands of appropriate trusted others who you have identified from your structures.

Humour and laughter

Humour is an effective self-care technique which quickly and rapidly decreases tension in the body and aids the return to a healthy equilibrium. Unless, of course,

you are like me, you have the ability to laugh until you cry and then you get stomach ache!

It's free.

There is a growing body of study which shows that laughter can aid the body to return to less dangerous levels of cortisol which are released when we are stressed.

We actually do not need to learn to laugh but we need to laugh more and together as often as we can. We all know of hilarious anecdotes from our career as well as we know sad, traumatic ones. It is important to begin to share the laughter with colleagues in safe ways which actually do not harm or belittle others, but which enable us to laugh at ourselves and relieve our tension.

Anger Management

Useful verse to look at Jesus in the temple John 1; 2-22

At times you may get so angry that you want to react, consider what the affects are if you do and try like Jesus to have your anger create a positive outcome.

Financial hardships

Useful verse to look at Luke 12:13-40

Proverbs 22:7

"The rich rule over the poor and the borrower becomes the lenders slave"

Being in debt causes tension and the worst you get the more stress it can cause in the family.

There are ways of dealing with money issues which can lessen pressure within the family. Consider obtaining a financial review on your family income.

- Circle any of the following which you find stressful as a parent:

Unrealistic expectations / Living within your means / staying out of debt/

Rationalizing your spending / taking appropriate risks/ saving money/ prioritising/

Planning for college/ planning for retirement/ tax/ Unemployment/ Insurance/ Health care/ Budgeting

List any others:

Let's Celebrate being a parent

Self celebration is to behold your accomplishments. It can contribute to the happiness and wellbeing which has been eluding you due to the impact of stress in the work place. In this chapter we look at:

- Reconnecting with what makes you who you are
- Listing your achievements as a parent
- Being aware of your strengths
- Being proud of yourself
- Putting right what you may have made wrong.

Celebrating you as a parent is about getting to a recurring and constant feeling of self achievement in the context of enhancing your self esteem and self worth

If you have disempowering conversations with yourself and are in the grips of stressors, then it is essential that you counteract these.

In order to fulfil your needs, it is vital that you eliminate the negative effects of stress and other associated programming you may have experienced over the years.

Read verses from the Bible

Self celebration will encourage a state of happiness and pleasure about yourself to counteract the stresses arising from the negativities which arise from your role as a parent.

Please remember this is not about making yourself feeling better if you have done something wrong.

Parenting can be stressful and we lapse into negative thoughts about ourselves when a particular crisis or situation arises. It is important to understand how we dealt with the situation and then to re-establish a balance about our self worth if we took a bit of a knock in our self esteem as a parent, for example if we did it wrong.

Exercise: reconnecting to what makes you who you are

- The name games:
 1. Call your name out loud whilst looking in the mirror. Smile at yourself as you do this.
 2. Write your name vertically. You can use your first name, surname or nickname. Use each letter to start positive and powerful word or a short phrase.
- The 'me' game:

Think about what makes you unique and things you have in common with your friends/in common with neighbours/in common with others around the world.

Exercise: listing your achievements

- Chart your success journey as a parent
Chart your successes using a time line. Look at what an enormous contribution you make to your family, consider that it's alright to be proud of yourself and plan your powerful journey forward.
If you are unclear about what your successes are write a list of what you will do in the future to have a successful time being a parent

Exercise: being aware of your strengths

- 'What am I to you?' questionnaire:
Select 5 of your friends and ask them to describe your strengths and attributes as a parent by listing them using one or two word descriptions only, not whole phrases. We are really not looking for anything else at the moment. Please do

not enter into a discussion with them about you. Tell them this is for some work you are doing and you need them to be honest. This is a simple exercise, and you do not wish to get any meaning from it at this stage. Make sure they write it down when you are not there. Discard any which you feel may have hidden meaning or are upsetting to you.

If this is too scary, you should list 5 of your attributes and strengths.

Get a dictionary and look up the definitions of the words you use to describe yourself as a parent. Get a thesaurus and look up the synonyms. Spend some time seeing if you are comfortable with the descriptions.

Dedicated: meaning: devoted to a particular cause, profession etc; single minded; assigned to a particular function.

Dedicated: synonyms: committed; devoted; enthusiastic; given over to; purposeful; single-hearted; single-minded; sworn; wholehearted; zealous.

Ring the words which you feel most comfortable with and which reflect you as a worker.

Use the words to make an empowering statement about yourself as a parent

Exercise: putting right what you may have made wrong

Self celebration may require you to put some things which you may have done in the past right as they may be getting in your way. If you think that this is the case you should consider how these things are affecting you now in your present.

Ask yourself some questions:

- What is your reputation?
- Spend some time looking at what legacy you would be leaving

- Make a list of the attributes which you consider not good for your reputation.

In order to counteract stress in any area of our life we need to have a balance.

Those who successfully teach and help people to deal effectively with stress state that there are 3 aspects which must be aligned in people's lives in order to create and sustain wellbeing:

- **Spiritual well-being**
- **Emotional well-being**
- **Physical well-being.**

Consider what changes may be necessary to heal you and open you up to loving and celebrating yourself and enhancing your well-being and enabling you to reach your full potential.

Develop your parenting goals

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman **Matthew 15:21-28** King James

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."

And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

By setting goals and devising an action plan to achieve your goals, you can actively reduce stress levels and move forward in your life in areas where you may be stuck. This is a process which can be done individually and with trained professionals such as life coaches or career developers, and mentors.

A **goal** tells you what you want; an **action plan** tells you how you are going to get it.

Looking at where you are, and where you want to get to, is crucial in the first step of setting and achieving life goals.

In order to begin this journey, you need to ask yourself some probing questions and spend some time answering them fully and truthfully.

1. Where you are now?

- What have you accomplished in your life, and are you really aware of what you have achieved?
- What are you proud of in your accomplishment, and what significant contributions have you made to others?
- What structures do you need to help you stay conscious and aware of and what you have achieved?
- What does your future look like?
- What are your interactions with others like? Can you get what you want and say what you want in an appropriate way?
- How have things gone for you in the past, i.e. do people let you down, what is your reaction, do you get disappointed and lose heart with the project? Yes or no?

You might now be at stage where you can begin to see what your goals might be. But consider, are they big enough? Do they fill you with inspiration?

2. So now begin to list what your goals are: what do you want to achieve?

Remember this is about what you want to do, not about what you think others will want you to do.

Your goals should not conflict with your natural values as this will only result in more stress.

Your goals must also be realistic and in keeping with your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those immediately involved with your life.

You may have to check out if your goals will conflict with your partner or your children's wellbeing.

- What do you see as being conceivable for you in your life?
- What is it that you see that you want to get out of the process?
- What is your main focus, i.e. your business, training, promotion, relationships?
- What do you think might be preventing you from achieving this? Do you need to have a goal about challenging the things that block you in life? For example, do you lack of confidence in what you are doing?
- Are you unsure of what goals you are following and are you setting any?

There are some practices that you can take on a daily basis where you can position yourself and realign yourself.

What is it that you are really passionate about in your life as a whole?

What would your perfect day look like if you were doing the things you were passionate about: from waking up in the morning and going to bed at night, what do you see yourself doing? Think really big.

Luke 19:1-10 King James

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

So now, with all of these considerations, begin to devise an **action plan** which will propel you through!

You may now have identified what is missing, what stops you and you can look at the things you need to have in place. This is called an action plan. Without an action plan it would be hard to achieve your goals.

It is also important to incorporate time specific goals

Now it's time to write them down, be specific. Use a table if you like to show your goals, what actions you will take, the timescale and how you will reward yourself as headings to follow

GOAL	ACTIONS	TIMESCALE	REWARD

- What are your timescales that will keep you on track?

This is really important.

Break down your actions into little steps if it helps and give yourself a timeframe to work towards. Use a diary, your phone alarm, a table, etc. If you don't make the timescale, adjust your actions and make another timeframe.

- What is your reviewing and rewarding structure that will chart what you have achieved?

At regular intervals, review your action plan and ask yourself if you are on track, what have you accomplished, what needs adjustment, what is stopping you and what else do you need to do? You will be surprised. You may have achieved things you never planned. Consider how you will reward yourself for your achievements.

All the while, congratulate yourself that you are valuing yourself as someone important and taking constructive action to create a fantastic future for yourself.

Keep rewarding yourself with something large or small when you reach your goals. This will have a positive effect on your wellbeing.

Areas to pay particular attention to:

- Diet and nutrition
- Fitness (this might sound simple, but exercise really does work and has a powerful effect on the chemistry of your brain. Research tells us that this is crucial, and the more regularly you do it, the longer lasting the effect. (We have not laboured the point about exercise, but it is crucial that you find the right one for you that fits into your routine life.)
- Alcohol and substance use.

Complete the following health audit and obtain information, advice, and support where you feel that you may need it.

Read about fasting and taking care of your body

Matthew 6:16 New King James

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance.

For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

So that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Selecting and limiting your diet for a short period, you can rid your body of the harmful toxins which can slow you down and make you feel ill.

Toxic chemicals come from a variety of external sources: fatty foods, cigarettes, alcohol, pollution, amalgam fillings, heavy metals, 'electropollutants', such as microwaves and mobile phones, and other factors – the biggest one being stress.

The aim of detoxing is to eliminate these toxins by cleansing your liver, kidneys, and intestinal tract.

Detoxing will boost your energy, help your immune system and help clear your skin. It will also balance and stabilise your blood pressure and blood sugar, and help with hyperactive tendencies.

Family Health Audit: private and confidential information

Do you have any of the following: illnesses, medical conditions, disabilities, or allergies?

List them:

Do you require more information, support, or advice about them in order to achieve success or career progression at work?

What are you going to do about getting more information, support, or advice in order to achieve success or career progression at work?

Have you had any in-patient/out-patient treatment for any conditions?

Are you currently taking any prescribed medication or over-the-counter remedies?

Do you know what immunisations you may have had?

What is your weight?

What is your height?

When did you last have the following check-ups?

Dentist Optician

Do you feel you know how to access medical advice in relation to your work if you needed to?

Do you feel that you eat well?

How many meals do you have per day?

What do you normally have for breakfast/lunch/dinner/ snacks?

Why do you think that your eating patterns are the way they are?

What leisure activities do you do, and how often per week do you do them?

How are you are currently feeling?

Circle any words that you feel would best describe how you're feeling: e.g. very well/well/anxious/upset/depressed/low/tearful/happy/down.

Rate how you are feeling by using a number ranging from 1-5, where 1 = feeling very positive about your future, to 5 = feeling very negative about the future.

How often do you feel like this?

What are your sleeping patterns like? Do you feel you sleep well, do you think you could do with more sleep, do you have trouble getting to sleep, do you feel tired all the time, do you need a small amount of sleep, do you take any medication or substances to help you to sleep, do you have trouble waking up?

How do you relax? Do you have any problems relaxing, what do you enjoying doing in order to relax?

Do you drink alcohol, do you take drugs, do you use substances, do you smoke?

Do you want help to stop taking alcohol/drugs/substances/tobacco?

Do you think they affect how you feel/think/sleep/ eat/relate to other people?

Review your answers and seek advice and support where you need it.

Corinthians 6:19-20 King James

*“What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,
which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”*

*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit,
which are God's.”*

Prayers to affirm:

Luke 11 1:13 Jesus teaches about Prayers King James

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

And he said unto them, When ye pray, say,

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins;

for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

Prayers are good because words reinforce and guide our energy. So words are powerful to us: they deal with what you and we believe about ourselves, our capabilities, and our situation. Jesus recommends that persistent prayers are the best way to find answers in your life.

The Bible says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7)

You can use prayers to realign what you want, to what you believe. This can be effective when dealing with the negative effects for stress in your everyday life.

- Actually write down the problem, issue, or challenge.
- Then write the preferred feeling you want.
- Look up prayers which will help you with these situations
- Write them on cards and say them when you need to

Communication with yourself and with God is important

Exercise: examine how you talk to yourself

Begin to look at this now. In a soothing voice, call your name out loud or in your head. Smile at yourself, acknowledge yourself for acknowledging your stress and being willing to do something about it. Look at your strengths, the things you admire in yourself. Think about your accomplishments and the things you want to accomplish, and visualise them, and see yourself doing them. Pat yourself on the back, shake your hand, and visualise yourself giving yourself a great big hug. Say “well done”.

Forgive yourself. Make yourself a promise about doing something that you have been putting off. Think about your amazing brain and consider that it is an incredible part of you which needs caressing by you. Marvel at your amazing imagination which is helping you work through these stressful situations every day. Reassure yourself that it will all be alright. Talk to yourself in a gentle soothing voice.

Well done!

Have you thought about your own family verse?

Remember mine was **1 Corinthians 3 “Love Conquers All”**.

From all of the work you have done there may be one verse that grabs your attention and really inspires you.

Write it out and put it somewhere that your family can see it every day, on the fridge or toilet wall, use a heading like the Martin family favourite verse... or something like that.

There is a wealth of information on the internet for Christians which can help to support you with stress and parenting. They will suggest more Bible scriptures which you might find useful in all areas of your life.

Best Wishes and God Bless to you and your family

Gradle Gardner

www.Parenting4Christians.com