

Stress: It's Contagious



Life was stressful B.C. (Before COVID). It could be any or all the usual things: Job, kids, partner (or no partner), money, family, all of it. But it was, for the most part, manageable. When it wasn't manageable, you had ways to cope. A night out with friends. A mani-pedi. Finding a pick-up basketball game. Dropping the kids off for a playdate. None of these things are safe right now. What's more, the stress is a lot worse, and there is no clear end in sight.

The kids are bouncing off the walls, too. What's going on with them? Why can't they sit and do their homework? Why are they melting down over the littlest thing? Why are they clinging to you and following you everywhere? Why do they

seem to need you just when your boss calls?

Stress is contagious! Kids pick up on everything. Everything. Like Santa Claus, "they know when you've been sleeping, they know when you're awake." Scientists have all kinds of terms for this, but it is part of your children's job to keep you in their sights. This ensures their safety. It's also part of their job to sense danger. And if they sense your fear, they will be afraid (needy, fussy, uncooperative, angry) too. If you're not happy, they're not happy.

Obviously, you can't escape stress right now. But there are some things that can help you regulate it. First, turn off the news: Facebook news, Instagram news, TV news. You know what's happening. It's no different now than it was a few hours ago. Turn off your phone for a while. It doesn't help to talk to everyone you know about how terrible things are. Kids can hear, and they can see, and they can feel. If you need to offload (and we all do), wait until they are asleep.

Take some deep breaths together. Shake out your hands and your feet. Do some jumping jacks. Bake something together. Call Grandma and tell her a silly story. Make a collage together. Laugh together. That's the best stress relief in the world.

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