

Conscious Creative Courageous LIVING WITH CHILDREN

A brief checklist for stressful times

These are reminders for times of trouble when children need this support even more for reassurance and security. These are also guidelines for giving children a solid foundation for health and wellbeing. Finally, when we ourselves are stressed and troubled, these foundations, when established and continued in everyday life, can support us through to calmer times.

Strengthen your healthy foundations for living

1. Cut down on stress and hurrying.

Identify and reduce stressors on yourselves and your children. Prioritise. Say no to the unhelpful (without guilt!) Even just mindfulness of stress helps. Children need unhurried, unscheduled time and space. Give them time to just 'be', to play freely, to be in nature.

2. Provide emotional warmth.

Make home a haven for love, mutual respect, recognition and understanding.

3. Provide protection and nourishment for the senses.

Discriminate between nourishment and mere

stimulation/entertainment. Make sure that there is enough quiet space for digestion, recovery and re-gathering. Provide a place for inner quiet and centredness.

4. Provide order and predictability

Consider the rhythms in the day for waking, eating, bedtimes etc. Create predictable routines which support good digestion and sleep – keys to good health and well-being. Eat together when you can.

Children feel safer when households are run in an ordered way and children know what the rules are. Create clear boundaries for children and clear consistent consequences.

Short term strategies to help stressed children.

1. Consider yourself.

Centre yourself. Slow down if necessary. Be firm, clear and loving. Get enough sleep.

2. Consider the child.

Consider what the children need? Are they too far 'outside' of themselves – scattered, erratic or out of control? Or are they too deeply 'inside'

themselves – tense, nervous, tightly held, reluctant, not expressing themselves? Consider what will bring a balance. Whatever you do, do it respectfully and mindfully.

What else could help?

- Touch / holding / stroking / massage. Be discriminating here. Observe the child's response. What helps most? Light touch, firm touch?
- Aromatherapy: lavender calms the nervous system. It can be used in baths or massaging the feet at bedtime.
- Quiet /whispering / 'sacred' time and space with you or alone. Bring an 'out of it' child inside into a quiet place. A tense child might be helped by being taken out into a beautiful place in nature where they can more easily open up and relax.
- Rhythmic movement. Rocking / swinging / .
- Release of pent up feelings through physical activity. Digging / gardening / running / dancing. (beware of this if the child is too 'out of it'.) Use quietening activities before bed.
- Calm music / singing. Avoid music with a beat which stirs children up.
- Water. To drink, to play in, to bathe in, to listen to. Even holding hands under running water can be calming.
- Food. Give them whole foods, fruit and vegetables. Consider avoiding over-stimulating foods – those that are overly sweet, salty, spicy or full of chemicals or colourings. Ensure meals are regular.
- Consider using calming herbal teas or remedies. Chamomile is soothing. In emotional and physical emergencies Bach Rescue Remedy can help centre both you and the child. (From health shops).
- Make sure they are getting enough sleep.

Remember, what children need most is for you to be calm, loving and reassuring. You can be their source of strength and reassurance. If you are in shock, grief, or other serious situations yourself, you may need to find another loving adult who can be that rock for them for a little while.

Further reading

Payne, Kim John, with Lisa M. Ross *Simplicity Parenting Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier and More Secure kids.* (Ballantine Books Trade Paperbacks, New York, 2009)

See also articles on the website

Strategies for healthy living- young children or

Strategies for healthy living in the family according to the age of your children.