

How Do Quality Parents Cope with Stress?

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Right at this moment, how many of these things are on your “to do” list: laundry, cooking, cleaning, helping children with homework, paying bills, bringing children to activities or appointments, calling your extended family members, responding to an email (or 50 of them)? But, even with all of that on your plate, you are taking the time to read this article! And that means you already have skills in self care. You did not ignore this *Caregiver Courier* to do one of the many things above. Good for you for taking a break for yourself for a few minutes.

Let’s do a short self-assessment about your current stress level.

In the past two weeks, how many of these things were true for you:

- You were so overwhelmed you wanted to cry
- You felt sad or frustrated because you lacked support
- You were so irritated with someone you could barely stand the sight of them
- You had a loss in your life
- You had significant physical pain
- You had emotional pain
- You had financial stressors
- You worried about a family member or friend
- You had a change in living conditions
- Something stopped working properly in your home or vehicle

Now, let’s look on the positive side. In the past two weeks, how many of these things were true:

- You laughed really hard
- You felt very relaxed
- You felt true love toward someone
- You did a physical activity
- You felt proud of something you accomplished
- You pet an animal
- You did something in nature
- You played a fun game
- You sang a song aloud
- You got a solid night’s sleep

So, did you have more stressors or more positive activities?

As quality caregivers, you give so much of yourself to others, especially your children. It is natural that this occurs, but the outcome is that you might be left feeling depleted, run down, or stressed. What helps

make you feel more peaceful and balanced? Try and think of those things, and give yourself permission to do more of them.

Here are a few positive activities you should incorporate into your everyday lifestyle:

- Get a good night’s sleep
- Renew old connections with others
- Make new connections
- Start a new hobby
- Eat regular, healthy meals
- Have some form of exercise on a regular basis
- Avoid or limit alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine
- Express your emotions to a partner or friend
- Ask for help and allow others to do things for you
- Keep a private journal
- Try not to base your success as a parent on children’s behaviors and issues. Traumatized children may not respond in the same way to your parenting as your other children.
- If a child’s trauma history triggers any of your own childhood issues, talk to a therapist, clergy person, or to supportive friends and family members.
- Take part in education, such as the free, online trainings at QPINevada.org. Parents have reported feeling recharged, and more hopeful, after getting another perspective on how to understand or manage challenging behaviors.
- Forgive yourself when you feel you have been less than perfect, and start each day out fresh.
- Above all, **BREATHE!** It only takes a moment to take a few slow, deep breaths and it can calm down your body and mind.

Finally, here is one thing you can do right now! Take one of your hands, and pat yourself on the back. Thank YOU for being a quality caregiver to the children of this community.