



What Mothers Say About Stress



Created for mothers by Helen Bourke-Taylor PhD©

Most parents feel stressed at some time or another regardless of their situation. Mothering a child with a disability or chronic medical condition can be a source of additional stress for many reasons. Mothers in this life situation may find that they experience constant and relentless stress.⁶ Whatever your situation, it is important to know that feeling highly stressed and overwhelmed is not something that you should accept as a part of everyday life. Help is available.

Research with mothers has shown that mothers who reported high levels of stress from caring for their child had

advanced cellular aging compared to mothers who were less stressed.¹⁰ However, it is important to note that researchers believe that

cellular aging can be reversed when due to extreme stress. Essentially, it is crucial for us to recognise and minimise the things that make us stressed.

Changing our response can relieve stress and makes us calmer.

What may trigger stress?

Research indicates that mothers are more stressed when:

- they participate in few health activities
- they feel less empowered
- they worry about their child's emotional well-being
- their child does not have appropriate services.⁹

In contrast to mothers who may experience constant stress, other mothers say that there are periods when they feel that all is well as they manage usual daily activities associated with raising a child with a disability.



So what can I do to de-stress in everyday life situations?

Preventing and preparing for situations that may cause stress can be a useful way to manage stress.

You may also manage the stress you are feeling through several coping mechanisms such as deep breathing, meditation or by participating in enjoyable activities.

If you feel like you could and should feel better, less frantic or stressed, less tired or aggravated, more joyful and energised, you are probably right.

You can help yourself.

Identifying supportive others who understand your situation is possible.

Whilst we can learn a lot from research findings, it is important to remember that the research findings presented here are about other people. You know how you feel, and how you manage the daily responsibilities that are necessary to assist your child, your other children and your family every day.

*'I've been more open with people about when I need help. I'm able to communicate that more, knowing I need to do that to be able to look after myself and to relieve some of the pressure and burden.'*⁵

As an expert in your own situation, you must decide what is applicable to you in your life.

Visit our website at <http://www.healthymothers-healthyfamilies.com/> for more information.

References 5, 6, 9 and 10: See Fact Sheet 13 for full list of references.