

Manage Your Mom Stress

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6 Tips To Control Stress



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## **Introduction**

Are you living with too much stress? Do you feel so overwhelmed you don't know what to do most of the time? Are your days out of control?

Are you spending more time screaming... crying.... pacing the floor... pulling your hair out. .. or lying awake at night worrying?

As moms we tend to have more than our share of stress. Our kids are screaming, bosses or clients can be demanding, your hubby is always ignoring what's going on around him. Grandma is constantly arriving unannounced. Phone's ringing, bills are overdue, customer packages are lost in the chaos of the place you call "home-office".

One of the reasons women fail to manage stress is our need to nurture everyone. We feel taking time out for ourselves might make us less loved, not a good mom, or we'll be viewed as having selfish behavior. It's our hard work and responsibility that makes us feel we have to do it all. We're willing to go the distance and make our child as well adjusted and happy as possible. To make our business a success. To please every one, every day no matter what. This can be frustrating and can be difficult to make happen.

We forget that by taking care of ourselves we make better moms and business owners. To manage our stress we might need to make a few changes.

- Make a plan. To reduce stress we need to plan on making changes. Planning helps us form habits to create change. Plan to have fun, to make life easier and to change what's causing you stress.
- Take care of your body.
- Take care of your emotions.
- Take care of your surroundings.
- Take care of your finances.
- Get help. Whether you need a professional, a spiritual or a friendly coach, ask for help.
- Try to find time daily to relieve tension.
- Determine how you react to stress.

## **Reduce Your Mom Stress in Fifteen Minutes or Less**

Stress is no stranger to the average mom. Day in and day out it tries to enter our lives through busy schedules, a messy home, and screaming children. Here are a few ways that moms can reduce their stress levels fast.

Remember that commercial for Calgon bath soap? Calgon would seem to whisk women everywhere off to exotic locales. Too bad that that can't actually happen—or can it? Climb into a nice hot tub, and try this quick visualization technique.

Imagine the place you would most want to be if you could. See the sights. Smell the air. Feel the breeze. Let the scene take you away along with the stress. It's simple but effective. You can do it anywhere and at anytime.

Do you own an mp3 player? If not, get one. You can load music, videos, and pictures on them. Mine is full of my current favorites, plus I have loaded some tunes that I used to love as a child. These were songs that my dad had on records. We would spin them for hours and dance.

Music that reminds us of happier times is a stress reliever. The memories that are conjured up relax our mind and return us to more peaceful times. Concentrating on these things leaves no room in our mind for stressful thoughts.

Laughter truly is the best medicine. Pick up the comic section of your local newspaper and give it a go. A good guffaw works your abdominal muscles. You can get in shape and have a good time while doing it.

Have a drink to relieve your stressful situation. I'm not referring to Jack Daniels or Bartles & Jaymes (although they are great, too), but Earl Grey. Tea seems to have a calming effect on the mind. My favorite is chamomile. Taking a few minutes to relax over a good cup of tea can lower your heart rate and your anxiety level.

Any one of these things can be done in fifteen minutes or less. It doesn't take much—just a willingness to get centered.

## Determine Your Worry Reflex Profile

Some people will turn to food cravings when dealing with a stressful situations. Others will blow their top at others. And still others will become a nervous wreck. Once you determine how you react to anxiety, you can find better ways to deal with the worry.

1. **The risk taker.** Do you smoke or drink or shop excessively more than you normally would? You are trying to distract yourself from the problem by focusing on risky behavior.

Instead of getting a rush from the risky action have a good laugh. Nothing makes you feel good faster than having a great laugh. Watch a great comedy, go to the local comedy club (without the kids, of course) or just pretend to have a great laugh. Just by making the laugh sounds and actions (ha ha ha and leg slapping or acting silly), your body begins to release the feel good endorphins.

2. **The overeater.** Do you pig out on breads and pasta? Polish off an entire bag of potato chips or a pint of ice cream? Do you realize you've eaten an entire box of Oreos and can't remember eating them? It's estimated that 1 in 3 women turn to food when facing problem or are feeling down. Food makes us feel better. It's not called "comfort food" for a reason.

If you must have carbs and sweets, choose healthier varieties. Eat whole grain breads and pasta over of refined. Eat slowly and savor the flavors. Indulge your other senses. Indulge in a scented bath if possible. If you can't get away from the kids immediately, open a bottle of ordinary vanilla seasoning (from the kitchen cupboard) and take a whiff. Or keep scented candles close.

3. **The clam up.** When facing stressful situations do you appear cool and calm on the outside, but inside your a nervous wreck? This is very common among women. We're trained to take care of everybody before we take care of us. We'll tell you we're not stressed because we don't know how to relax.

Being strong under pressure is admirable, but you need to schedule time for yourself. Get a massage when you can. If that's not possible find a private spot where you can let it all out. Write down everything that is bothering you. At the very least, vent a few minutes before you hit the sack at night to get the worries off your mind for a good night's sleep.

4. **The nervous wreck.** Do you spend the night going over every bad thing that could or did happen during the day? Does it feel like your nerves are dancing a jig? Your fear of losing control leads you to feel anxious. The more anxious you are, the worse decisions you make.

Try to find quiet activities to feel calm and help you focus on the moment instead of the big problem. List the bad things that could happen but immediately list the opposite as well - the good things that could happen. Pick one item from the good list and put your energy into making it happen.

5. **The Angry, Fly off the Handle.** When confronted with stress do you snap at others over little

things? Are you impatient with your kids or interrupt others while they are speaking? Do you get agitated? You are a type A personality. You are highly vulnerable to stress symptoms such as high blood pressure and stroke. Anger has its place in coping skills, but not directed at your kids or spouse every time a problem occurs.

If you need to release your anger energy, find a constructive activity to blow off steam. Learn kick boxing. Take up a competitive sport. A pet is great for defusing your anger. Just petting your cat or dog or watching fish swim or a talking to your bird lowers stress levels. If you can't have a pet, volunteer at a local animal shelter or take the kids with you to a local petting farm or zoo.

Hit a 10-second pause button. As soon as you feel stress coming on, count to 10, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, concentrating on your breathing. Once you determine how you react to anxiety, you can find better ways to deal with the worry. Learning how you react can help you defuse and relax

## Your Health and Stress

Into every life a little stress must fall. When the stress reaches higher than normal levels on a regular basis, your health can start to be affected. Moms may look invincible or even think they are invincible but it's not true. Stress and good health don't mix.

Stress is our body's response to outside stimuli. Sure that sounds good, but it doesn't mean very much. When you come home from a hard day at work and the sink is full of dishes, the laundry room is piled high with clothing, and the sink in the bathroom has been dripping all day, your blood pressure begins to rise.

The first person who says something to you usually gets to hear about your frustration. Or, they get to see you run bawling to the bedroom and shut the door. This is stress.

Moms, we have to protect our health. If the above scenario is typical of your daily life, watch out. You need to cease and desist before you end up in bed or the loony bin. Popping pills is not a long-term solution to the side effects you are experiencing from your stress. Antacids and headache medication is not the answer.

Did you know that too much pain medication can irritate your digestive system? Your body will fight back with bowel trouble or worse. There's a reason that labels tell you not to exceed a specified dose in twenty-four hours. We've got to stop abusing our bodies.

Are you a stress eater – increasing your caloric intake as your stress increases? I am. I didn't know it until I had gained about twenty pounds. Stress can lead to some unhealthy ways of coping. My fix was peanut butter cups. Do you know how many calories are in those things? I would shield my eyes from the nutritional information. It's a wonder I didn't explode.

Stress can lead to poor eating habits. Overeating or eating the wrong things can lead to obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. These illnesses can lead to heart disease and stroke. Basically, we're talking about a premature death. That is not an option for you, mom.

Stress can also cause ulcers, migraine headaches, and depression. These conditions can be avoided when we take better care of ourselves. Enlist the aid of your spouse, parents, sisters, brothers, and friends. You are not the first one to suffer stress and you will not be the last. Living with it is not an option.

As a mom, your children can even help you. How can that purple-faced person with jam all over himself help you? Kiss his jam stained face until all the jam is gone. Jump on the bed with him. Snuggle together with some books and let all the day's worries stay outside that door.

He may be a reason for some of the stress, but he is also the joy of your life. You endure because of his angelic face. Be there for him when he grows up by learning to cope with stress now.

## Reduce Mealtime Stress

Mealtime can be a madhouse. Kids hiding their peas, feeding their chicken to the dog, and spilling the milk doesn't seem quite right after you've slaved over a hot stove. Learn to keep stress to a minimum at dinnertime.

What is the worst part of dinner? I would say it is the preparation. After work or a day chasing the kids, the last thing mom wants to do is perspire over a hot stove to fix food that the family will only half eat. After all that work you may be too tired to even eat.

Moms, I am coming to the rescue. Have you thought about a menu planning service? This service provides busy moms with menus tailored to the needs of their families. They also provide shopping lists to keep your pantry stocked full of things that can be used for any number of meals. Some services also offer organizational tips for meal prep to make it easier for busy moms to cope with dinner.

Most of the meal recipes are simple and can be prepared ahead of time or on the spot with ease. Sometimes we just don't know what to fix or what the kids will eat. They offer kid friendly recipes, as well.

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Side Note Tip:

[Mom, Dinner Time Does Not Have to Be Stressful. This resource offers menu planning with grocery lists to help you plan ahead and save time.](#)

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For the mom who would rather not spend a lot of time in her kitchen, spend some time in someone else's. Franchises like Let's Dish® offer mock kitchens in their facilities for busy people to make meals ahead of time. The premise is simple. They take all the guesswork out of fixing a meal.

Easy to follow recipes are posted at various prep stations. All the ingredients are right there with the appropriate measuring utensils. The meats are fresh and lean to provide a healthy meal base for your family. You can prepare as many or as few meals as you want. A full portion contains six servings while a half contains three.

At dinnertime, it takes only about thirty to forty minutes to prepare each meal. Most of them you just pop it into the oven and set the timer. They offer side dishes and desserts as well. You can arrive home at the same time as your family and have dinner ready thirty minutes later with your family instead of washing dishes.

If there isn't a program like this near your home, you can create one with a few friends. Make a shopping list to create a few staples. Maybe Chili, lasagna, and chicken soup. Then, instead of making batches for one family, you each make a monster-sized batch, and share. You can do this all together or separately and just meet to split up the meals. Either way, you'll save a lot of time and money.

Dinner doesn't have to make you cringe. Make it easy by planning ahead. That way, everyone gets a good meal without the fuss.

## Money and stress

Money is a big stress factor, no matter how much you have, or don't have. You worry about what you are going to do with your money, where you're money's going to come from and how are you going to pay this month's bills.

Money can be a cause of stress for anyone. Single moms or stay at home moms may stress more about money because they are the only provider or not actively employed to help with bills. If money is a stressor for you, here are some helpful tips to combat it.

Lack of money is the biggest money concern. The bills are due and the bank balance won't cover it and leave money for food, daycare, and the like. Thinking about the possibility of the problem repeating itself next month lends additional stress to the equation.

Before you do anything else, sit down and look at your expenses. Every family has hidden expenses that can be eliminated to save a bit of money. When I am running behind in my schedule, I grab takeout food for the family even when I planned to cook. If I'm tired, this is the solution.

These and other things are expenses that can be done away with. Takeout food adds up over the course of a month. That same money could have been used for a trip to the grocery store which would have provided meals for more than one night.

Monthly bills for impulse purchases are a financial sinkhole. A couple I know decided that if they didn't have the cash on hand to pay for something they would not buy it. Credit card interest rates were eating them alive each month. They did keep a credit card handy for emergencies but that was it.

A good rule of thumb is to sleep on it before making a purchase. This seems inconvenient but it could save money. If you feel the same tomorrow, then buy it. Some people wake up the next morning and rethink the decision to buy. Right there you've saved some dough.

A family budget can put a stop to excess spending. Take a look at the income for all parties. Subtract the monthly bills like utilities, car payments, insurance, mortgage, and childcare. Whatever is left can be put into line items such as groceries, medical, car repairs, and miscellaneous. It's okay to eat out if it won't wreck the rest of the budget.

Another way to relieve the money burden is to start a home business. I found that, by taking control of my own destiny, I could stop putting all the stress and responsibility on my husband. This helped us bring in some much needed income, and it removed all the weight from his shoulders.

## **Work at Home Mom Stress**

When you work from home there still aren't enough hours in the day to get things done. Deadlines for projects hang over your head and dinner still has to be made. Your clients depend on you and so does your family.

When you are a work at home mom, it's hard to separate work from family life. Not only are you working out of the place where you live, but, depending on the nature of your business, you may not have to leave your home all day. If you run an online business, you could be running a load of laundry or fixing lunch between business teleconferences. This can be good... and bad.

The dividing line can get smudged for work at home moms. To eliminate the tug at the elbow from your little one, solutions need to be found to restore that line between the business and the family. Separation is important to your sanity and to reducing work related stress.

Assess the current situation. If you use your dining room as your base of operations, you may want to consider alternative options. If the dining room still gets used for dinner or other projects then it is not exclusively your office, so you are uprooted several times each day, for meals. That isn't effective, and it isn't a comfortable working environment.

The home office needs a room with a door where you can be apart from the rest of the house. A den or a garage can be converted into office space that is exclusive to your business. I have a friend whose office is the laundry room, just because it has a door! When that is not an option, set up shop in your bedroom. One side of the room can be your office.

Organization is the next step. A messy desk is not a sign of an uncluttered mind. Everything needs to have its place. If you worked in an office, your boss would not stand for a messy work space. You are the boss now, so don't stand for it either.

A basket with separate compartments will help to organize the odds and ends on your desk. You can keep rubber stamps, letters, invoices, pens, pencils, and the like in here. If you need to, use a label maker to designate which space is for what.

Have a separate telephone line. In your office space, all calls should be for business. You don't want one of the kids answering a business call or picking up the phone while you are on a conference call. This also goes for the printer and the computer. If it is shared by the family, then sensitive material could be compromised by other users. You don't want to go looking for the laptop only to find out that your husband took it to work.

A calendar or date planner will help you to keep business appointments and deadlines straight. You can coordinate your business calendar with the family calendar so that there are no conflicts. On the business calendar, cross out the dates when you have family events planned.

If you have to, hire a sitter on the days that you have the most work to do in the office. As a work at home mom you control your schedule. Having a sitter keeps the kids away from your office (and, with a good sitter, having fun). Someone else who you trust is caring for them so you don't have to worry.

Mixing business with family in the home setting can be a major source of stress. Keeping the business side of your life organized and separate though inside your home is crucial to success in both areas.

### **Single Mom Stress Reducers**

Single moms act as mother, father, friend, and disciplinarian. They are a force of one that never seems to get a break for long. Stressful situations can seem even more so when there's no one to share the burden. Try some of these tips to find relief when you need it most.

Phone a friend. No, this is not *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* Family members and friends can make great sounding boards when things get tough. Keep the number of someone you trust on speed dial in your cell phone and on the house phone. When you feel like you can't hold it in anymore, vent to someone who understands.

Pop in a funny video or DVD. After the kids have gone to bed, curl up on the couch with a bag of popcorn and a good video. Laughter combats stress and reduces the hormone cortisol. This hormone has been in the news because it's supposed to make us fat. Well, you know moms don't need that on top of everything else. Let a good laugh keep the yucky feelings away.

Take a bath. I mean that literally. Hopping in the shower while brushing your teeth and barking orders to the kids doesn't count. An honest to goodness tub bath with the sea salts and bubbles is in order. Lavender has the effect of calmness on the senses. Add a bit to your bath water and soak until you prune or the stress is gone, whichever comes first.

My sister is a single mom. Every now and then she will go get a spa treatment and a full hair treatment (cut and color). I'll watch my nephew and give her time to herself. When a woman looks beautiful she feels beautiful. Instead of being the one doing the serving, let someone else wait on you for a change. Save as much money out of each paycheck as you can towards a big spa day. When you have enough to splurge, find a family member or friend to babysit the kids and get going. Nothing reduces stress like watching someone else doing the work.

Dance your blues away. You don't have to be a professional to shake what your momma gave you. Turn on the music while you are picking up the socks for the umpteenth time or washing the dishes. Who said housework had to be a bore?

Pump up the volume as loud as the neighbors will allow and boogie on down. No one will see you dip that broom. Singing and dancing engage the diaphragm, the abdominal muscles, and every other muscle you haven't shaken in a while. Good feeling endorphins that are released put our lives into a different perspective.

Single moms deserve downtime too. Try these suggestions or some of your own. Mix them up or pick one that will work for you.

## **One Final Note: When to Seek Help For Stress**

For some of us, stress is a condition that we cannot tackle alone. If you are a mom who has tried to manage your stress alone but to no avail, it may be time to seek help from an outside source. Here are a few suggestions to help with that decision.

Stress can affect our physical body. Too much stress can lead to symptoms like hair loss, headaches, weight loss or weight gain, ulcers, and depressive disorders. All of these symptoms can be signs of conditions other than stress, but if you have been in otherwise good health before they showed up, there is a good chance that stress may be the cause.

Examine your daily life. What are the pressures you face each day? Stress on the job can spill over into family life. The threat of downsizing or loss of a job due to poor performance can cause problems at home to get blown out of proportion.

If the problem is within the family or the marriage, this can in turn affect your performance at work. Increased sensitivity is a sign that something has hold of your mind and is not letting go. In both situations, the consequences could be devastating and life changing.

See a medical doctor if your physical body has shown signs of stress overload. Be sure to tell your doctor when the symptoms started and their intensity. The more information you can provide to our doctor, the better chance of an accurate diagnosis. Holding back anything because of embarrassment is not wise.

Get a full physical exam each year. This will give your doctor a baseline to work from when assessing new problems. Whatever his diagnosis, comply as fully as you can. It's the difference between getting well or getting worse.

Stress builds up when there is no outlet for the pressure. Moms that have no one to confide in about things going on in their lives could use the help of a professional counselor. A counselor will listen as you speak and offer coping suggestions and solutions.

Many employers offer employee assistance programs (EAP) that allow employees to see counselors for little or no cost. The human resources officer would have information about that. These programs are confidential.

There are clinical psychiatrists and psychologists who can help, whether the problem is related to a mental or chemical breakdown in the brain or situations outside your control. Marriage counseling can help you and your spouse if this is the source of your stress. Group counseling can help moms whose stress has led to unhealthy addictions like smoking, drinking, or overeating.

If your weight is causing stress, join a fitness center and sign up with a personal trainer – someone who will hold you accountable. Sometimes just having an appointment to work out will get you to the gym. And, of course, getting regular exercise can be enough to combat your high levels of stress. Either way, it sure can't hurt!

Getting help is nothing to be ashamed of. Moms are always helping others, but sometimes we are the ones in need. Doing nothing is the worst solution to the problem of stress.

## **Conclusion**

You don't have to live in constant stress . Small amounts of stress is good for you. By finding ways to relieve your stress before it overwhelms you, you will have a healthier life. By taking action with a few simple steps to manage your stress, you can create a calmer lifestyle and a happier family.

If you would like more ways to help manage your stress, get your copy of Take Action: Reduce Stress at [www.momstress.com](http://www.momstress.com).

[Inspiring Mom](#) is a place for moms of any age to take care of themselves. It's the spot to find resources, recipes, laughter and motivation.