



Your Family Friend

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A Resolution for Less Stress

Everyone talks about the stress of the holiday season. But what happens on January 1st? Back to the routine, New Year's resolutions, holiday bills in the mail. What a way to start the year!

According to Sylvia Carlson of Suite101.com, if we only keep one resolution in the New Year, it should be to learn how to manage our stress. She says that some typical resolutions include: quit smoking, lose weight, get more exercise, and be kinder to others. If, however, you are always feeling stressed out, you will tend to smoke, overeat, sit in front of the TV, and be anxious and oversensitive. She suggests some of the following tips for beating stress, and thus helping to achieve our other resolutions:

"It is the mind that makes the body."
Sojourner Truth

- 1) Try to make some time for yourself.
- 2) Be kind to yourself and try to make time for things **you** enjoy.
- 3) Listen to relaxing music or learn to meditate.
- 4) Find a style of exercise that is realistic for you and your life.
- 5) Laugh!!!
- 6) Never take on more than you can cope with.
- 7) LEARN TO SAY NO!
- 8) Get professional help if you feel depressed or extremely anxious.
- 9) Be thankful. Count your blessings every day.
- 10) Try to stay in the moment.

In addition to these great ideas, please continue reading for a wealth of information on positive, life affirming ways to get the stress out of your life!!

How to Deal With Everyday Stress

Stress management is the ability to maintain control when situations, people, and events make excessive demands. What are some strategies for managing the stresses in your life?

- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Take "stress breaks throughout the day and briefly remove yourself from a stressful situation.

- Prioritize and try not to sweat the small stuff.
- Get enough sleep.
- One of the best ways to manage stress is to try being **positive**. Give yourself messages as to how well you can cope, and channel the energy into being productive.

This Issue

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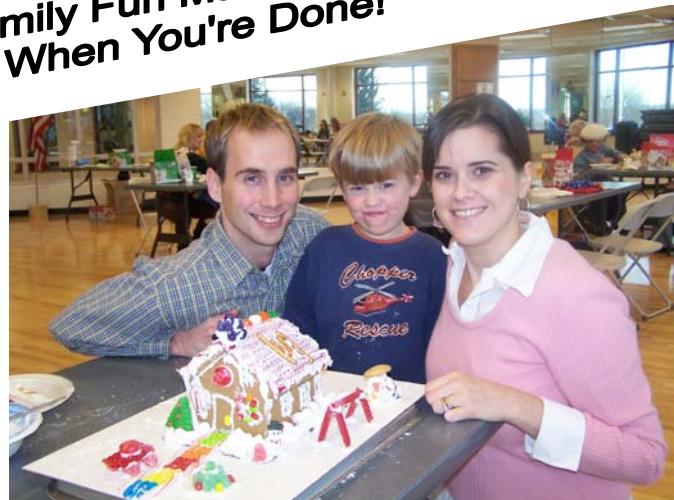
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The Healing Power of Humor

Family Fun Makes Smiles When You're Done!



Giggles & grins were all around last month at the Sturgeon Bay Family Center when 20 families took part in the Gingerbread House Making event held at the YMCA.

One of the healthiest ways to beat stress is through laughter. According to Mike Moore, international speaker and writer, in order to live better, we should laugh! He notes the following benefits of laughter:

- :) Lowers blood pressure
- :) Promotes relaxation and reduces stress.
- :) Increases the oxygen level in our blood, giving us more energy.
- :) Increases the endorphin activity in our body resulting in a sense of well-being.
- :) Helps us keep things in perspective.
- :) Banishes boredom.
- :) Makes us more socially attractive. People enjoy being with those who laugh easily and often.
- :) Increases our enjoyment of life.

Moore says that laughing can be called social glue because it bonds us to the people we laugh with. He feels that in order to live a better life, it is necessary to laugh more.

For more information on Mike Moore go to:
www.motivationalplus.com



Laughter: A Family Stress-Buster

Bringing the power of laughter and fun to your family during stressful times is a sure-fire way to strengthen it.

According to the Clemson University Extension, fun and humor can help us cope with problems, create a safety valve for the expression of anger and other strong feelings, give us perspectives and balance, and provide a means of family communication and creative expression. Here are a few tips for what kind of humor and play is appreciated by different age levels:

- **Preschool Children:** Fun is the name of the game for the little ones. Take a cue from their playful attitude and carefree approach to life. If they see humor displayed in positive, appropriate ways, they are more likely to model this as they learn to interact with others.
- **Elementary Children:** Play and interaction with others is very important to school-aged children. Allow time for this type of play and relationship-building in your home. A child's sense of humor will begin to surface through these activities. Allow for lots of positive, healthy laughter.
- **Middle/Junior High Adolescents:** This is a pivotal point in the growth and development of children in this age group. Acceptance and approval are very important. Keep fun and humor as positive as possible with your "tweens". Laughter provides a healthy way to deal with stressful issues and situations.
- **Senior High Teens:** Teenagers are always on the look-out for

ways to add fun and enjoyment to their lives. Although media often provides much of this entertainment, the family is still a safe and comfortable place to experience fun and humor. It is important for teens to learn to laugh at themselves and with others in order to create a healthy view of humor.

- **Adults:** Adults tend to take themselves WAY too seriously. As a result, many have lost touch with the importance of fun at home, on the job, and in other aspects of life. In today's fast paced world, it is critical that adults experience the benefits of laughter and fun. It is not necessary to be a humorist to find ways to bring humor into the lives of our families.

"Laughter is fat-free, salt-free, non-taxable, environmentally safe, constantly renewable and doesn't require batteries."

Dealing With Senior Stress

Life brings us different kinds of stress at different stages of our lives. The stress of career or raising a family gives way to other stressors as we age. **The Elderly Health Service** offers some helpful advice about the kinds of stress faced by seniors and ways to manage it.

Some common sources of stress are:

- Changes in lifestyle and financial status after retirement
- Caring for grandchildren
- Caring for a sick spouse or partner
- Death of relatives or close friends
- Deterioration of physical abilities and chronic illness
- Worries about not being able to live independently
- Worries about needing to live in a nursing home or assisted living facility.

Some common signs of stress:

- Insomnia or nightmares
- Loss of appetite
- Heart palpitations
- Frequent urination
- Muscle pain
- Tiredness
- Anxiety, fear, frustration, or depression
- Restlessness, poor concentration, or forgetfulness

Ways to manage stress:

- 1) Share your difficulties and feelings with friends and relatives. This will help facilitate the ventilation of feelings and learning new ways to cope with stress.
- 2) Be a positive thinker. Appreciate your achievements and strengths to build self-confidence and cope with stress.
- 3) See professional help if you need it. Don't turn to smoking, drinking or substance abuse to cope with stress.

- 4) Keep an active social life, a healthy lifestyle and learn relaxation exercises.



These seniors keep active by attending the **Older Adult Breakfast Social** the first Wed. of the month in Southern Door from 9-11. **Not Just Desserts** is another Family Centers senior program held monthly in Northern Door from 1:30 – 3:00 The 1st Monday at the Sister Bay Library and the 2nd Monday at the Bertschinger Center in Egg Harbor.

Stress Risks for Parents of Children With Special Needs

Our body's response to stress has always functioned as a defense mechanism in hostile or dangerous situations. Often called the "fight or flight" response, it triggers a cascade of physiological changes, such as increased heart rate, increase blood flow, an alteration in hormone levels, and stimulation to the areas of the brain that control mood and motivation. In essence, our bodies go on full alert.

For a parent of a child with a disability, the child's acute needs and frequent medical emergencies provide ample opportunities to trigger a stress response.

Prolonged exposure to the hormones released during stress can result in insomnia, digestive problems, heart

disease,, depression, memory impairment, physical illnesses, and other complications.

Prolonged stress may contribute to persistent and severe depression, along with increased feelings of anxiety, helplessness, and impending doom. It also can increase a person's vulnerability to developing certain personality or behavioral disorders.

So what can be done to manage these types of stresses? Here are several suggestions:

- Maintain a large social support system. Have people to talk to who care about your child's needs.
- Acknowledge the importance of taking good care of your own physical and mental health. This assures you

by **Veronica Beheme, MSW, LCSW**

can take the best possible care of your child.

-If your stress response is working overtime, speak to your doctor or a licensed therapist to assess your options. Often a few changes to your daily routine can result in stress-reducing benefits.

Information for this article taken from "Stress: Unhealthy Responses to the Pressures of Life" MayoClinic.com.

For more information on disability related issues, please contact the PATH office at 559-6217.

PATH is an acronym for: **Promoting Access To Help For Families with Special Needs**. A support group meets at 6:30 pm every 3rd Thursday of the month at 323 S. 5th Ave. in Sturgeon Bay.



S. 1592 State Hwy 42
 P.O. Box 332
 Maplewood, WI 54226
 (920)856-6616
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The mission of the Family Centers of Door County is to Strengthen and Support Families and Communities.

Directors Corner

Gina Wautier, Executive Director

Did you know that this publication (and previous issues of Your Family Friend) are available on our website?

www.doorcountyfamilycenters.com

You can easily download a copy and print it off for future reference or to pass along to a friend. In addition, all of our events are listed along with program details. We will be upgrading our event notification service very soon. If you are currently receiving our notices, watch your inbox for details. If you do not currently receive our e-mail notices, send us a note event@doorcountyfamilycenters.com and we'll add your name to our address book.

As of February 1, the Southern Door Family Center will be moving to a new location. With a grant from the Door County Community Foundation the Family Centers will manage the operations of a Community Center 6 miles south of Sturgeon Bay on Stone Road. More details will follow as things are finalized.

We thank Dennis and Barb LeFevre, our current landlords for their generosity while renting from them these past 6 years, and the residents of Maplewood for their support.



Washington Island Family Center

Washington Island Recreation Center

847-2226

Sister Bay Family Center

Northern Door Children's Center

854-4244

Fish Creek Family Center

Northern Door YMCA

868-3660

Sturgeon Bay Family Center

Sturgeon Bay YMCA

743-4949

Southern Door Family Center and Main Office

HELP of Door County Satellite Office - Maplewood (Until Feb 1)

856-6616 or 1-800-856-1651

