Whoa Baby!
The ergonomics of parenting babies and small children

By Tamara Mitchell

Being a parent is challenging and it’s rough on the body for many reasons. Taking care of yourself and maintaining body awareness when you care for your children is critical for survival without suffering battle scars of parenthood.

This article addresses some of the physical and emotional strains parents face and makes recommendations for injury prevention. We hope that with increased awareness of the potential for injury, you may be more motivated and creative in finding solutions and/or less tolerant of products which may be very comfy for baby, but which put your own body in jeopardy.

Stresses
Stress is an incredibly complex response to perceived and actual pressures. The resulting physiological and emotional responses of the body are detailed in our article on stress: http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/Stress.pdf. Different people respond in different ways to various sources of stress and it can result in loss of sleep, increased or decreased appetite, headaches, stomach aches, poor concentration, irritability, and reduced immunity to various bacteria and viruses.¹

Financial Stress – The financial aspects of adding a child to the family is often unexpected and often not discussed a lot. Planning and budgeting for the costs of raising a child or children and establishing a savings plan can relieve a lot of worry about finances. According to the Department of Agriculture, a middle-income family will spend more than $250,000 (over $300,000 adjusted for projected inflation) to raise a child with public education, excluding college.²,³ Food and clothing costs are less for babies and small children than older kids. College and health care costs are likely to rise in future years. Adult children are living with parents more these days and parents are helping their kids more as they struggle to get started in careers during a down economy with soaring education costs, so the expenses of having children is getting extended for more years than in the past.⁴ And only 20% of households are now what would be considered “traditional” with two heterosexual married parents.⁵ Fewer and fewer families of any sort are feeling like they are financially secure and tend to live paycheck to paycheck.⁷ All of this can lead to money worries and stress.

The USDA provides an online calculator that can help you compute the costs more closely based on several factors in your personal situation.⁶ Knowing the costs and saving up for them can help when extra expenses arise.

Financial stress has been shown to be associated with higher mental health problems, marital problems, poorer child rearing effort, harsh parenting, and poor physical health.⁷ From the standpoint of the child, financial stress, unemployment, and/or poverty is associated decreased parental involvement in the child’s schooling, increased developmental risks, decreased routine
medical and dental care, and problem behaviors. Parents’ mental health problems alone was not associated with poorer childrearing or school involvement, so it appears that financial stress is directly involved in these problems.

**Emotional Stress** – When we are worried, bothered, rushed, or overloaded the body feels tense, which is a natural reaction to real or perceived emergencies. Constant mental stress keeps our bodies tense, but it affects everyone differently. Emotional stress can result in sleep disturbance, changes in appetite, headaches, stomach aches, poor concentration, irritability, and weakened immune system. We can learn to both cope with thoughts and events so that they don’t affect us as much and we can also learn to relax and get better at sending signals to our body that it is OK to return to a normal, non-emergent state.

Some things that can cause emotional stress are completely preventable by allowing a few minutes of time for planning or taking a few steps to prepare contingency plans when something goes awry. Things as simple as getting duplicate house keys and hiding them in the garden or leaving a few minutes early to allow for traffic slowdowns are suggested in a helpful list of proven stress reducers from the Child Development Institute. They also suggest such tips as learning to relax your standards and doing something to make yourself look better so you feel better about yourself. Taking time for you is extremely important, although it may seem there is never time. We’ve compiled a list of suggestions that include practical tips, lifestyle and outlook shifts, as well as relaxation techniques in Appendix A. Try a few things to help make life happier and less stressful in your own situation.

**Physical Stress** – The everyday tasks involved in caring for a little person are physically stressful. Bending over the changing table, struggling to pack the car, or putting the baby into the car seat are examples of the common causes of sore backs, shoulders, and pain in hands and forearms.

It is necessary as a child gets older to evaluate all the things you are doing for them when, in fact, they may be able to do a lot on their own. Many kids are eager to be more independent, climb onto your lap, into bed, into the car, and pick up their own toys or things they left on the floor. Let them feel important when they are able to do things on their own or when they can help you, and lend them a hand when they need one, rather than assisting them in every situation.

**General Body Care Rules**

*Back, Neck and Shoulder Care*

Bending, turning, and reaching are inherent in childcare. To minimize back, neck and shoulder pain, avoid overstretching the tendons and ligaments that attach muscle to bone. Bending and lifting incorrectly will cause muscle tension and overstretched tendons and ligaments. Leaving the house involves lugging along all types of supplies and gear, so try to take care of your own body with the following guidelines and suggestions.

*Hand and wrist strain*

Keep your wrists in neutral position when holding your baby, pushing the stroller, or doing other tasks. Bent wrists put a lot more strain on them and requires more force, so keep the wrists straight. There are many tasks in childcare that require the use of fine motor skills and good eyesight. The tools to perform tasks like clipping little finger and toenails, combing tender scalps with tangles, and cleaning out tiny noses need to be designed for an adult’s hand size, but a baby’s scale at the receiving end. There are many products that are reasonably priced and are designed for the parent who must use them. Do research online and in the stores to find products that help you reduce strain from everyday childcare tasks.
**Foot Care**
Wear comfortable footwear with proper shock absorption. Your body must absorb 1 ½ times your body weight with every step! Avoid high heels or hard-heeled shoes.

**Self Care recommendations:**
- Weight control, adequate sleep, and exercise are very important in maintaining a healthy upper body.
- Stretching exercises keep your muscles long and limber, and counteract awkward, stressful postures.
- Invest in furniture, strollers, and carriers that are easily adjustable. Adjustability is needed not only to accommodate the child as it grows, but to the adult who is caring for the child! Trying to use work surfaces that are too low, carriers that don’t fit, and strollers with handles that are too low or too high results in poor posture that causes physical fatigue and strain. If parents or other caretakers are quite different in height, take time to make adjustments before using the equipment.
- Only take what you need when leaving the house. Don’t take everything to the car in one trip. Keep the weight down on each trip and make sure you are holding things in a comfortable, balanced position.
- Take breaks when carrying heavy things. Stop, set it down and rest a moment!
- Delegate tasks to other family members. Even older children can help carry some things for you, open doors, push the stroller (if you adjust the height of the handles), etc.

| General injury prevention rules to follow: |  
| --- | --- |
| 1) Always keep a child close to your body. |  
| 2) Bend from your knees, not the waist |  
| 3) When you lift, spread your legs far apart and stagger your feet so one foot is farther forward than the other. |  
| 4) Keep your back straight |  
| 5) Avoid twisting |  
| 6) Keep your feet pointed in the direction of the lift. |  
| 7) Avoid standing for long periods of time. |  
| 8) Maintain your fitness level, especially your core muscles which weaken during pregnancy. Pilates, yoga, and post-natal exercise classes are great for this. |  
| 9) Limit the amount of time you spend on the floor with your back unsupported. Sit on a chair with back support or at least lean against a couch or wall so you don’t tire your back muscles out. |  
| 10) Rest when you can! |  

Illustration courtesy of Reference 12
**Lifting a baby or child**\textsuperscript{8,12,15,16}

- Only lift a child if you have to.
- Lift them close to you and centrally, not to the side or twisting. Get up close to the crib and lower the railing.
- Stand with weight distributed evenly on both legs, feet shoulder width apart or wider.
- Engage your core muscles before and during lifting.
- Do not lift toddlers from the floor. Make them climb onto a stool or chair for lifting.
- Avoid bending from your waist and lifting the baby using your back muscles.
- When carrying a car seat, put both hands on the handle, bend your elbows, and carry the car seat close to your body in front of you, distributing the weight evenly between both hands. Do not carry the car seat on your arm like a purse! When possible use a stroller or wear a baby carrier to transport your baby.

- When lifting babies from the floor use the **tripod lift** illustrated below or lift the baby onto a higher surface from the floor, stand up, then bend at the knees and lift the baby from the intermediate surface.
- Place one foot next the baby and lower yourself down to one knee. Make sure the baby is close to your knee on the floor. Slide the baby from your knee to your mid-thigh and lift the baby onto your opposite thigh. Put both of your forearms under the baby and bring the baby close to your chest.
- Keep your back straight and your head facing forward
- Push your buttocks pushed out as you bend.

**Infant Lifting Techniques**

**The Tripod Lift**

**Turning while holding the baby.**

If you need to turn, lift the baby as you usually would, turn your lead foot 90 degrees in the direction you want to turn, pivot your other foot to beside the lead foot. This saves twisting your body at the waist.\textsuperscript{12}

**Putting the baby or child in/out of the car.**
Putting a baby into a car seat is often very awkward. Do not rush! Make sure you take time to position yourself properly.

Keep the child close to you and avoid reaching as much as possible. Put one foot into the car to support your weight as you lean forward with the baby facing the car seat. Keep your back straight and bend your knees to lower your body while holding the baby close to your chest.

Once children are 2 or 3, they may be able to climb into the car by themselves. Give them a hand, if needed and have patience if it takes them a bit longer.

**Carrying**

Keep the baby as close to you as practical. Maintain a neutral posture with your shoulders in line with your hips, keeping your body as upright as practical, changing position occasionally. Stand tall and avoid leaning backwards or to the side. When you carry your baby on your hip, wrap your whole arm around the baby to minimize strain from flexing your wrist, do not thrust your hip out, and switch sides occasionally to even things out and give one side a break.

Carry your baby with two hands in a tucked, face out position to reduce strain on your back and arms. It is good for the baby, too as it gets their body ready for rolling. Use a carrier with wide, padded straps and a waistband for older babies to help support the baby’s weight and take pressure off your shoulders. Try on different carriers before you buy one to make sure it fits you and is comfortable. Key features in a baby carrier are symmetrical support and supporting the baby above your hips. A good, adjustable carrier will allow you to carry the baby comfortably for longer periods and well into toddler years. Make sure to adjust the carrier for your body. If your shoulders are getting tired, loosen the shoulder straps to transfer more weight to your hips. An alternative to a baby carrier is the baby wrap, such as the ones sold by Boba.com. There are many videos on their website with instructions for tying the wrap onto your body and tucking in the baby. Advantages of the wrap are the wide distribution of weight on the shoulders and back.

Make sure the baby is sitting straight, not leaning to one side. Alternate between carrying the baby against your chest and on your back.

Putting a baby into a carrier is awkward, but strap the carrier on first, then sit keeping the baby close to your body while
you place the baby into the carrier or try standing with one leg on a higher surface to prop the baby on.\textsuperscript{10}

Wearing a baby in a carrier or wrap is beneficial in many ways. It is not only good for the baby and allows closer bonding and communication, it is far less stressful on the caretaker’s body than carting around heavy car seats and strollers. Of course, when travelling in a car, jogging, or other activities that can place the baby in a stressful or dangerous situation, car seats and strollers are important, but at least part of the time, a wrap or carrier is a wonderful, practical solution that can reduce a lot of wear and tear on the body.\textsuperscript{19,20} Take turns carrying the baby with other family members, so nobody bears the load for too long at a stretch!
Feeding
Avoid holding your head forward in one position during a feeding session. Use a nursing support pillow when breastfeeding or bottle feeding to reduce strain on the neck, shoulders, and wrists.\textsuperscript{10} The Boppy and MyBrestFriend are both excellent products. The BestLatch model of the Boppy and MyBrestFriend have a strap that attaches around your waist so you can stand or walk while feeding.

Bring your head up and tuck your chin periodically. Hold left ear to left shoulder for ten seconds, and then switch sides.

As your baby gets older, make sure you adjust the height of the high chair to a comfortable height for you to feed without unnecessary bending. Preferably, feed while you are sitting down as close to the high chair as possible to avoid reaching.
Changing and other surfaces
Use a changing table at about waist height to keep yourself upright. If you are changing your baby on a bed, kneel down and keep your back straight. Avoid changing your baby on the floor.10

As the child gets older, the use of a ramp or small steps up to the changing table (or other places that might require lifting) allows the child to climb up to the surface. Avoid lifting whenever you can!

Sitting, Holding and Rocking
Use chairs or furniture with good back support. Avoid sitting on the floor too long. When you do sit on the floor, support your back against a wall, a piece of furniture, or a large pillow. Significant load is placed on the upper body when you sit without low back support.

Transporting
Lifting and carrying a baby or toddler is physically challenging, but leaving the house adds significant baggage to the problem with diaper bag, snacks, toys, and gear. Use multi-seat carts or wagons to transport children and toys rather than carrying all of them.

If you are carrying your baby in a car seat consider investing in a LugBug, designed specifically to keep your arm and wrist in a neutral position, reduce lifting effort, and increase grip stability.21

There are so many options when it comes to strollers! It is important to take into account your lifestyle, your activities, the age of your child, and whether you plan to use a car seat in the stroller frame or not. If you are a jogger who runs on bumpy dirt paths, you have different requirements than someone who needs to load and unload a stroller on busy city streets with paved sidewalks. Just make sure you research all the options and find a stroller designed for your lifestyle and conditions.

Designers often take into account the comfort of the baby as well as the activities, ground surfaces, and portability for the parents, but not a whole lot of effort goes into the actual ergonomics of parents using a stroller. Even an extensive, historical survey of stroller designs didn’t look at the ergonomics of the person pushing and manhandling the stroller; it looked at ergonomics from the standpoint of the baby.22

To reduce back strain, eliminate bending and forward reaching.

1) Find a stroller that allows you to walk standing upright and closely behind without kicking bars or getting toes caught in wheels
2) Adjust stroller handles to a comfortable height while standing and walking. The handle should be about the height of your belly button.  
3) Make sure you don’t scrunch your shoulders up or hunch over, overusing the muscles of your neck and upper back.  
4) Look for a stroller that is lightweight to carry, easy to fold and unfold, with gas spring assists.

To reduce strain on arms, wrists, and hands:
1) Use a stroller with vertical pushbar handles so that the forearms are in their neutral position as shown below right. Rotating the arms so palms are facing either down or up causes twisting of the muscles, tendons, and bones in the upper arm which causes strain, especially when pushing a load.

2) Keep your wrists straight while pushing the stroller.  
3) Avoid pushing the stroller with one hand.  
4) Use a stroller with buttons and controls that allow for easy adjustments without hand strain.  
5) Do not wrap your thumbs around the handle of the stroller. Keep your thumbs tucked next to your hands. The muscles and tendons in the thumb can be strained and painful when you don’t use the whole hand.
BAD
- Forearms rotated to pronated position on horizontal handlebar.
- Wrists bent with pressure on the carpal area.
- Arms straight and lifted, causing muscle tension in shoulders, upper back, and neck

GOOD
- Forearms in neutral position on separated, vertical, individual handles
- Wrists straight
- Arms hanging naturally in relaxed position

Interacting/Picking up toys
When interacting with a child, avoid bending at the waist. Assume a squatting or kneeling position, or sit down. Use a kneeling pad if you kneel a lot.

Incorporate picking up toys as part of the child’s routine rather than leaving repetitive bending and stooping for you. It’s good training for your child and it saves your back.

Storage
Store frequently used and heaviest items in an easily accessible area and at waist height to avoid reaching overhead or stooping.

Caregiver Nutrition
Feeding your baby or child is a top priority, but parents need to make sure they are getting adequate nutrition also, to feed the muscles and soft tissues of the body and to maintain a necessary level of energy. Please read our article on Nutrition, Nutraceuticals, and healing to make sure you understand how to feed your body to keep it healthy: http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/NutritionNew.pdf.

Treatment
For chronic tightness and stiffness:
- apply a heat pack
- do some stretching and strengthening exercises. We have many suggestions on our website. A few for the relieving back strain are shown below. http://working-well.org/Website/stretches.html.
1. Stand upright.
2. Place your feet shoulder width apart.
3. Place your hands on your lower back.
4. Lean backward while keeping your neck straight.
5. Lean further back until you feel a slight stretch in your back.
6. Hold for a count of five.
7. Return to the upright position.
8. Repeat three or four times.

**Backward Stretch**

1. Lie on your stomach with your legs straight and feet together.
2. Prop up your upper body with your forearms.
3. Push upward while keeping your pelvis on the floor.
4. Hold for five seconds.
5. Gently lower yourself to the floor. Remember to keep your forearms in contact with the floor at all times.
6. Repeat five times.

**Press Ups**

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Press your lower back onto the floor.
3. Grasp one knee with both hands and pull toward your chest keeping your head on the floor.
4. Keep the other knee bent and foot on the floor.
5. Hold for a count of ten.
6. Return to starting position.
7. Repeat with the other leg.
8. Repeat ten times on each leg for three sets.

**Lower Back and Hip Stretch**

1. Lie on your back.
2. Bend your knees at a 90-degree angle.
3. Tighten stomach muscles and buttocks.
4. Slowly push your lower back downward.
5. Hold your back in this position for five seconds.
6. Slowly return to normal and relax.
7. Repeat five times.

**Pelvic Tilt**

1. If you don’t have the energy to do stretches and exercises, try relaxation techniques that involve lying down.  
   * get a massage or do some self-massage. We have a web page devoted to massage and self-massage: [http://working-well.org/Website/massage.html](http://working-well.org/Website/massage.html)  

For sudden acute injuries, stop, rest, use an ice pack, and consult a health practitioner.
For pain, non-steroidal anti-inflammatories may help in the short term, but if pain is chronic, consult your health practitioner.

**When to seek help**

*Back pain*

Generally, back pain goes away in a few days by itself. Even though it can be very painful, it is generally caused by muscle spasms. Therefore, medical attention is not required. In a few cases, something more serious may be indicated.

Call your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms *a few days after injury*:

- Pain that keeps you from moving.
- Pain that runs down one leg or into an arm.
- Night pain that keeps you from sleeping.
- Pain that increases or does not decrease after a few days rest.

**Immediately** call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty controlling bladder or bowel movements.
- General unwellness
- Headaches
- Loss of sensation in the rectal area.
- Pain following a fall or impact to the back.
- Severe pain of any kind, weakness, tingling, numbness, or inability to move.
- Pain that is steadily increasing over a number of hours.
- Chills, fever, or night sweats.
- Difficulty with balance or coordination.

*Hand, arm, or shoulder pain*

If you experience pain, numbness or tingling, try to identify the source of the problem and find a way to avoid the strain. If the symptoms do not go away within a few days, make an appointment to see a medical professional with adequate training in soft tissue disorders. Your primary care physician or OBGYN does not specialize in such conditions, so ask to see a specialist. Pain medication might not be a good idea for a nursing mother. Body therapy will facilitate recovery. Please refer to our articles on Cumulative Trauma Disorder for more information: [http://working-well.org/articles/archive.html#RSI](http://working-well.org/articles/archive.html#RSI).

Products


Baby Bjorn Baby Carrier. [http://www.babybjorn.com](http://www.babybjorn.com)
Boba Baby Wraps and Carriers.  https://boba.com/


Ergobaby carriers and nursing pillows.  https://store.ergobaby.com/


APPENDIX A
STRESS REDUCTION TIPS

Compiled from the Child Development Institute and the now-defunct iVillage.com

Practical Tips

• Turn needs into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don’t get attached to preferences.
• Simplify, simplify, simplify…
• Say “No!” Saying “no” to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don’t have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
• Exercise several times a week even if it is just a walk. Connecting with nature is very healing.
• Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil).
• Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
• Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
• Don’t rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc. (“The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory.”-Old Chinese Proverb)
• Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
• Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart “at the worst possible moment.”
• Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
• Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
• Plan ahead. Don’t let the gas tank get below one-quarter full. Keep a well-stocked emergency shelf of home staples. Don’t wait until you’re down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
• Don’t put up with something that doesn’t work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers, whatever are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
• Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive at an airport one hour before domestic departures.
• Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won’t have to go through the stress of losing things.
• Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
• Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
• Set up contingency plans, “just in case.” (“If for some reason either of us is delayed, here’s what we’ll do.” Or, “If we get split up in the shopping center, here’s where we’ll meet.”)
• If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then, the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
• Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
• Don’t forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it’s just for 15 or 20 minutes.
• Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
• Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
• Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments. Allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
• One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don’t accept a job which requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don’t associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.
• Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old “the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get,” idea).

**Lifestyle and Attitude Tips**

- Keep a journal – There are no rules, just write whatever you want. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal, or a paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.
- Exercise – Hundreds of studies have found that exercise is one of the most beneficial stress-reducers. In addition, it reduces blood pressure, decreases muscle tension, and increases endorphins, the hormones that give you a sense of well-being.
- Listen to music – Different styles can fit your various moods, so play whatever you feel like playing. Sing and dance!
- Introduce rituals – Make everyday occurrences into something special such as a daily bath or shower, or having coffee with a friend.
- Share time with friends – Indulge in meaningful conversation with close friends. Women especially gain comfort, support, and intimacy from their close friends. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.
- Spend a few hours outside each day – Even when the weather is bad, it’s important to recharge yourself by having contact with daylight and the outdoor world.
- Schedule your worry time – Give yourself 30 minutes a day to confront worries. If you find yourself worrying at other times, put them aside until your designated worry time. This will free up a lot of time for you without worries! Worrying never really solves problems, it just wears you down.
- Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit or worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.
- Play – Go to the park and swing, paint a picture, do something that stimulates your creativity and imagination. It’s a lot of fun and boosts energy levels.
- Laugh – Watch a funny video. Like exercise, laughing increases endorphin levels, helps to reduce stress and makes you feel happier.
- Savor good food – Busy parents can forget to eat, they eat the wrong foods, or they gulp down junk food on the run. Low fat, high carbohydrate foods such as whole grain breads or fruit are a good option as is low fat foods like broiled...
chicken breasts, veggie burgers or fish. Please read our article on nutrition: http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/NutritionNew.pdf.

- Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn’t get mowed this weekend.
- For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count‘em!
- Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
- Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.
- Eliminate destructive self-talk; “I’m too old to…,” “I’m too fat to…,” etc.
- Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work week is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you are not accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job on the weekend which you can finish to your satisfaction.
- “Worry about the pennies and the dollars will take of themselves.” That’s another way of saying: take care of the todays as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.
- Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or anything else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.
- Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than on being loved.
- Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise upon.
- Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
- Learn to live one day at a time.
- Every day, do something you really enjoy.
- Do something for somebody else. Make a meal for someone who is in need.
- When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment) may be just what you need.
- Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.

**Relaxation Tips**

- Water therapy – Taking a long slow shower or bath is one of the best ways to unwind. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.
- Meditate or pray – Take 20 minutes in a quiet place to connect with your spiritual side. Quiet your mind and focus on just one thing (e.g., your breathing, the flame of a candle) and release your stress. You can envision being in some place you find very beautiful and relaxing such as a warm beach. Feel the breeze and warm sun on your skin, smell the salt air, listen to the waves and the seagulls until you are no longer aware of anything except this little mental vacation scene. This will lower your blood pressure, relax your muscles, and clear your thoughts.
- Take a nap – Even 20 minutes will help you feel more refreshed and ready to tackle the rest of the day, although napping late in the afternoon may interfere with your sleep at night
- Love and massage – Intimacy is a great way to relax, so don’t forget to share time with your significant other!
• Take some quite time alone – Ask someone to take the kids for a couple of hours or find a place where you can go to be alone so you can have some quite time to read, watch a video, sleep, go for a walk in the park, and enjoy your solitude.
• Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 15 or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times. You can learn more about the power of Breathwork in our article: http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/Breathing_2015.pdf
• Practice progressive relaxation. Start with your feet and lower legs. Tighten the muscles as hard as you can, feel the tension, then gradually release the tension a little at a time. Next tense all the muscles in your hands and upper arms by clenching your fists, and then gradually release the tension. Move up your body, tensing and then releasing each section of your body as you find your breathing slows down and you possibly feel a tingling sensation throughout your body. Try to practice this every day. After a couple of weeks, you will probably be able to relax tense body parts without tightening the muscles just by thinking about them.
• Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.

REFERENCES:


15. Useful Advice for Lifting and Carrying Your Child. By Tellefsen, T. http://www.peartreechildcare.co.uk/blog/back-pain/


