



4

Stress and Anger Management: Techniques

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Anyone can become angry, that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is NOT easy.

— Aristotle



4



Stress and Anger Management: Techniques

KEY CONCEPTS

- ▶ Stress is a normal part of parenting.
- ▶ Managing stress effectively is critical to parenting children effectively.
- ▶ As parents we teach and model how to cope with stress.
- ▶ Using The Four Questions will help us in our parenting choices.



GOALS

By the end of this session parents will:

1. Identify a personal support system.
2. Learn about longer term stress reduction techniques.
3. Practice using The Four Questions.

MODULE 1

KEY TO ICONS



Guided Visualization



Flip Chart



Home Activity



Two-Person Activity Or Dyad



Group Sharing



DVD



Group Discussion



Activity

Be Flexible And Adjust As Needed

Each module gives only an example of an agenda. It is crucial for you as facilitator to tailor the agenda, pace, and style to the needs of the particular group of parents with whom you are working. The sessions are intended for a fast-paced, two-and-a-half-hour time frame. Each module probably contains much more material than you can comfortably use in that time.

Think about:

1. Are there too many activities to carry out realistically in one class? If so, do less.
2. Are there activities in the appendices that might be more effective for the class? If so, substitute.
3. What style of presentation will work best with the parents in the class? Adjust the style to the group.
4. Individualize. Would your group prefer to focus on one topic for a number of weeks? There is enough material in each module to be used for two, three, four, or more classes. Through pacing and the use of appendices, there is sufficient material to expand on topics over a period of time.





AGENDA

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Welcome/Announcements | 5 minutes |
| 2 | Review Last Session/Home Activity | 25 minutes |
| | Video: <i>Stress Busters Recap</i> | approx. 2 minutes |
| 3 | Group Sharing Time | 45 minutes |
| 4 | What Are Our Parenting Expectations?: Discussion | 25 minutes |
| 5 | Stress And Parenting: Presentation | 5 minutes |

- | | | |
|---|--------------|------------|
| 6 | BREAK | 10 minutes |
|---|--------------|------------|

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 7 | Understanding Long-Term Stress:
Presentation, Activity, and Discussion | 45 minutes |
| 8 | Session Review | 5 minutes |
| 9 | Introduce Home Activity | 5 minutes |
| 10 | Close | 5 minutes |



MATERIALS

1. HANDOUT

- “Special Time” Activity Cards

2. SUPPLIES

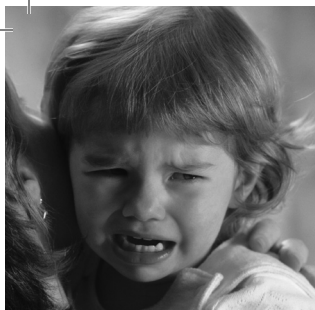
- Name tags
- Flip chart, colored markers, and easel
- Pens or pencils and paper

3. REFRESHMENTS

- Paper plates, cups, and napkins
- Coffee, tea, juice, cocoa, and bottled water
- Food—fruit, cheese and crackers, chips and salsa, raw vegetables and dip, cookies, muffins

4. VIDEO EQUIPMENT

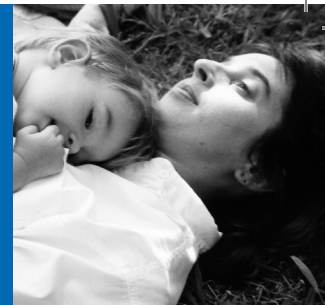
- Video: Stress Busters Recap
- DVD player and monitor



PREPARATION

1. **Review the *Agenda* for this module**, then read the material that expands each agenda item. Read the material in the appendices. Decide which, if any, of the additional activities from Appendix 4.1 you want to use. Revise your agenda as necessary.
2. **Prepare the following flip chart sheets:**
 - Agenda*
Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress — Copy the *Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress* from Page 17.
3. **Bring the following flip chart sheet:**
 - Ground Rules*
 - The Four Questions*
4. **Prepare the following handout:**
 - “Special Time” Activity Cards* — Photocopy the Activity Cards on Page 19 onto heavy paper and cut them apart (or, make your own Activity Cards on 3” x 5” index cards). Make enough cards for each parent to receive two.
5. **Bring copies of handouts from previous sessions.**
6. **Preview the video *Stress Busters Recap*** if you have not already seen it. Review the discussion questions.
7. **Phone any parents who might be in crisis**, anyone who missed the last class, or anyone you feel needs individual support.
8. **Review the Home Activity** that you introduced at the last session.
9. **Set up the video equipment.**
10. **Arrange the room** so that parents can sit in a semicircle and see the flip chart, DVD player and monitor, and each other.
11. **Set up the Resource Table.**
12. **Set up the refreshments.**

SESSION 4



POST THE AGENDA
POST THE GROUND RULES

1 Welcome /Announcements

5 minutes

2 Review Last Session / Home Activity

25 minutes



Show the video *Stress Busters Recap*.



Ask parents which *Stress Busters* they tried during the week. Did anyone come up with something that works especially well for them? Ask them if they would like to share it.

It is not uncommon for people to become more aware of, and sometimes more concerned about, issues that cause stress once these issues are raised and brought out in the open. Let the parents know that this is normal.

Ask parents if they were more aware of physical sensations since last session. Were they able to connect these physical responses to stressful situations? Which ones? Were they the same each time? Are there particular parts of their bodies that express stress more than others?

What kinds of self-talk did parents observe during the week? Were they able to change their self-talk from negative to positive?

Ask if parents used the *Filling the Bottle* breathing technique. What was their experience with it?

Check in with the parent who had the suggestions to use from the *Parent Challenge / Suggestion Circle* activity last time. How did it go? If the suggestions from last week weren't successful, ask why, and whether the suggestions should be modified. Or, have the parent pick some other suggestions from the list.



3 Group Sharing Time

45 minutes



Sharing occurs at the beginning of this session so that you can use parents' real-life examples of long-term stress or situations where Stress Busters might be inadequate in your discussion of the long-term stress reduction techniques described in the second half of the class.

4 Stress And Parenting: Presentation

5 minutes

Parenting is often stressful, sometimes very stressful. Even though we love our children, we may find ourselves responding to stress by yelling at them, spanking them, or treating them in ways we would never treat other people. When we respond to our children in this way we lower their self-esteem. For example, if our boss yelled, “How many times do I have to tell you to fill out the blue sheet when you come in! You’re impossible!” we would probably feel embarrassed, humiliated, bad about ourselves, and angry, and our self-esteem would suffer. It’s the same for our children. When we manage our stress we are modeling skills for our children, and we help maintain their self-esteem.

Parents As Teachers

As parents we want to minimize our stress and stressed reactions to our children. We also want to teach our child useful ways to express frustration and anger. Our children learn from watching us. Our children need to see the steps we take to reduce our own stress. When they see us handle our anger and frustration positively, they will begin to learn the same skills. When they see us take three DBs and count to 10 when we are angry, or take a Parent Time Out, they are learning how to deal with their own anger. When we treat our children with respect, when we listen to them, and respond to them constructively, especially when they are disagreeable, we are teaching them important life skills.

We are our children's first and most important teachers. Whether we are teaching our children how to manage their own stress or how to behave, we need to remember that how and what we choose to teach them reflects the values we want for our family. Remember the values you identified in our first session? These values should guide us as parents as we teach our children how to be in the world.



5 The Four Questions

XX minutes



POST *The Four Questions* FLIP CHART SHEET

1. What do I want my child to learn?
2. Is what I'm doing teaching that?
3. Are there any negative results from it?
4. If so, what can I do differently?

The Four Questions can help us as we teach our children. We have talked about how our values guide what we want teach our children. We also have to take into consideration their developmental level and temperament. What we can expect from a three-year-old is different than from a five-year-old. We will be talking more about development and temperament in Session #9.

Here are The Four Questions:

1. *What do I want my child to learn (from this experience, situation, or opportunity)?*
2. *Is what I'm doing teaching (my child to learn) that?*
3. *Are there any negative results from it (my behavior)?*
4. *If so, what can I do differently?*

Discuss what these questions mean.

Take a situation, such as parents who want their child to stop hitting her brother. The usual initial response to the first question is, "I want her to stop hitting her brother!" Take some time with the group to promote the habit of thinking of what they want the child to do rather than not to do. This takes some getting use to.

If, in answer to the first question, parents come up with something general, such as "I want her to be nicer to her brother," then ask them to think of a specific behavior they can teach such as, "Use words when you are angry." Discuss how you can teach that behavior. Walk a suggestion through The Four Questions and see how it works.

For example: You want your daughter to stop hitting her brother. One thing you could do is hit her back, to let her know how it feels to be hit. Let's take that through The Four Questions.

1. What do I want my child to learn from this situation?



The most obvious answer is not to hit her brother. It may also be to learn how to handle her frustrations or anger in a better way than hitting.

2. Is what I'm doing teaching my child to learn that?

Although hitting her may stop her from hitting her brother at this moment, what have you taught her?

3. Are there any negative effects from my behavior?

Aside from being a poor model for how to handle anger and frustration, what other things might she be learning? To fear her mother or father? If you are bigger you can get away with hitting? Anything else?

Think of the kind of family you identified you wanted in the first session. Does this fit with your values? Is this teaching respect? Kindness? Caring? Love? Self-esteem?

4. If so, what can I do differently?

Go back and help parent specifically define what they want their child to do and how they can teach this without negative side effects. In this case, you might want to teach your child how to handle her anger or frustration in a way that is productive, such as using her words to express her feelings. If so, what could they do in Question #2?

Perhaps, it is getting down to your child's eye level and saying something like, "I know you must be feeling angry at your brother, but hitting isn't a way to show your anger or solve the problem. What do you want to ask him to do differently?" Or, you may suggest she takes a break until she can get her anger under control, and then come back and talk to her brother about what she would like him to do differently.

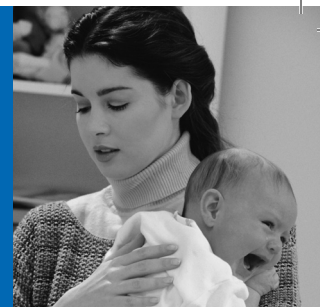
Keep in mind that in order to decide what might work for her, you would have to know the age of the child. A five-year-old hitting her baby brother is different than a two-year-old hitting a younger or older brother. Always remember that we need to have realistic expectations according to their developmental level. Temperament also will play a part here. Your decisions about what action to take would be different for an impulsive child as opposed to a very patient child who finally reaches to her limit with her brother's behavior.

Try using another scenario with the parents, walking them through using *The Four Questions*.

Through our actions with our children we teach them our values, rules, and why they are important. Think about these times as teachable moments, as well as opportunities for you to model handling stress and anger.

6 BREAK

10 minutes



7 Understanding Long-Term Stress: Presentation, Activity and Discussion

45 minutes

Before the break we talked about modeling stress management for our children. When we use Stress Busters, our children will see us managing our stress and will learn to do it themselves.

Stress comes in many packages. Sometimes it's wrapped in the pressure of a moment, other times it's stuffed into the responsibilities of a lifetime. The stress management techniques discussed last session diffuse the kind of stress that builds quickly. They are quick techniques to be used during those moments of pressure when we're trying to keep cool.



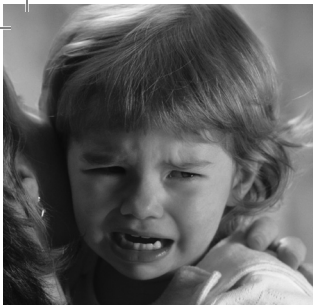
But what about the stress in our lives that is deeper—the stress that comes with ongoing financial difficulties, chronic health problems, or troubles in our relationships? What can we do to reduce this kind of stress? Here are some suggestions.

POST THE *Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress* FLIP CHART SHEET

Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress

1. Build a support network.
2. Create family routines. Be consistent.
3. Simplify family routines at high-stress times.
4. Have one thing a week that you look forward to doing with your family (“Special Time”).
5. Take care of yourself.

1) Build a support network. *In times past, parents of young children often lived in the town where they grew up. They had a network of friends and family that could help them with child care, finances, illness, housing, even meal preparation and laundry. Both men and women relied on others in their family and community in order to survive. Today, many of us don't have a support network. We need to create one. As we've discussed, we all need a support system. We need to reach out to our friends, neighbors, and community to get and give support. This Make Parenting A Pleasure class can be the beginning of an ongoing support group.*



Ask parents to turn to the Support Network Form on Page XX of the Parent Booklet. Have them spend about five minutes filling in all the areas they can.

Ask the class what they noticed as they filled out the Support Network Form. As individual parents respond, ask the other members of the group if they had the same reaction.

2) Create family routines. Be consistent. Routines offer a source of stability and comfort to children and families. All of us, and especially children, need to know what's expected of us and what we can count on. Predictable patterns can be stress reducing. If I know that I will eat after mom gets home from work and that after dinner I will play, get ready for bed, hear a story, and go to sleep, I feel more safe. My life has a routine that lets me know what is happening. Even if that routine gets juggled a bit, I know that it will still have a structure, something I can count on. If, on the other hand, I don't know when it will be time to eat, play, or sleep, I feel out of control and anxious.

Establishing regular

- *mealtimes,*
- *bedtimes, and*
- *family times*

helps to build a structure for children to feel safe and secure.

We need to try to be consistent in our

- *expectations,*
- *discipline, and*
- *routines.*

Of course, each family has to find its own balance and know that occasionally things happen that change our day-to-day routines. At these moments, we need to be flexible and trust that our family rhythm will be re-established.

Ask the class to describe some of their family routines. What works especially well for them?

3) Simplify family routines at high-stress times.

During times of stress ask yourself:

- What is essential and what is not?
- What can be done differently?
- Can daily life (housekeeping, cooking, shopping, chores) be reorganized?

For example: Cooking in quantity helps to cut down cooking chores later in the week.

Ask the class for other examples.



4) Have one thing a week that you look forward to doing with your family (“Special Time”). Special Time is something special you plan to do with your family, some activity that you all enjoy. It could be staying up late on Friday night, reading together before bedtime, or taking a walk on Sunday afternoon. Make the time and space in your life to bring good things in.

What kind of things can you do with your family for Special Time?

5) Take care of yourself.

Do those things that help you feel more positive about yourself:

- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Breathe deeply.
- Remember, it's OK to ask for help!

You can ask for help from a partner, friend, neighbor, or co-worker. Learn that you do not need to be responsible for everything or have to do everything. Asking for help sometimes is all right.

Tell parents that a copy of Five Basics For Managing Long- Term Stress is included on Page XX of the Parent Booklet.

8 Session Review

5 minutes

Review the *Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress*:

- Build a support network.
- Create family routines. Be consistent.
- Simplify family routines at high stress times.
- Have one thing a week that you look forward to doing with your family (“Special Time”).
- Take care of yourself.

Also, think about The Four Questions we discussed today. See if you can use them in your decisions about teachable moments this week.



9 Introduce Home Activity

5 minutes



The goal of this activity is to help parents make a commitment to do one thing with their child as a Special Time, and one thing they look forward to doing for themselves before the next class. Strongly encourage them to choose activities they will enjoy.

Pass out two “Special Time” Activity Cards (see Appendix 4.2) to each parent. Ask parents to get together in groups of two or three.

As in the Home Activity in *Module 2 – Nurturing: Taking Care of Ourselves*, parents need to fill in their names and what they plan to do. Both cards should say the same thing. Ask each parent to share with other members of their small group what he or she has written.

Reconvene as a large group. Ask if anyone wants to share their ideas. Collect one of the cards from each parent. Next session, you can review the cards and ask parents if they were able to follow through with their plans.

10 Close

5 minutes

Add your own impressions of this particular session in terms of how parents are generating great ideas for managing stress. Acknowledge that this material is difficult to talk about because it encourages us to look inward at our own lives and see the sometimes negative patterns that we have taken for granted. You might say:

Talking about stress is stressful, but we are learning important ways to cope with our individual stresses that help us feel better about ourselves as people and as our children’s parents.

APPENDIX 1

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XX *“Special Time” Activity Cards*

APPENDIX 4.1

ACTIVITY 1

Responses Under Stress



Here's an example of how we can model positive and effective stress reduction for and with our children.

Suppose you've had a really hard day at work. You are late getting home, your two-year-old is cranky and needs to eat right away, and your five-year-old is jumping up and down asking you to read her a story right now.

At times like these, we want to run someplace far away where we won't be bothered.

Ask parents to think about responses they might have to their five-year-old that would:

- 1) be respectful of the child;
- 2) protect the child's self esteem;
- 3) model managing stress positively; and
- 4) be reasonable for the parent.

Write the parents' responses on a sheet of the flip chart. After all the responses are collected, ask the parents to point out the ways some of the responses meet the criteria you have listed above. Tell the class that of course no solution works all the time, but being thoughtful about the way we respond helps all the time.

ACTIVITY 2

A Typical Day



Help the class take time to write out a “typical” day. What are the things that happen every day?

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

What are important things that you do every day which can be “flexed” as situations arise?

Suppose something terrible and/or wonderful happened to alter your routine drastically. For example, just as you’re ready to take Junior to preschool, you slam the door on your hand, or you’re ready to leave the office after a long day and the boss says he needs you for at least two hours longer, or your best friend who has lived in another state for five years calls to say she’s in town for just five hours and can the two of you get together for dinner.

Create a backup plan.

What can be dropped? Who could you call? What could you do differently?

You might want to make agreements with your friends, neighbors, and relatives to help each other out when you need help.

APPENDIX 4.2

Appendix 4.2: Overview

The following appendix contains support information, a worksheet, and a handout for use with this module. With the exception of the handout, all the material is also included in the Parent Booklet.

The Four Questions

Parent Booklet, Page XX

Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress

Parent Booklet, Page XX

Support Network Form

Parent Booklet, Page XX

“Special Time” Activity Cards

Handout (see *Preparation, Page 6*)

IMPORTANT: Only material marked specifically as handouts or *Parent Booklet* information may be photocopied for use with the *Make Parenting A Pleasure* curriculum. All other material from the *Make Parenting A Pleasure* curriculum is COPYRIGHTED AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED.

The Four Questions

- 1 What do I want my child to learn?
- 2 Is what I'm doing teaching that?
- 3 Are there any negative results from it?
- 4 If so, what can I do differently?

Five Basics For Managing Long-Term Stress

1 Build a support network.

2 Create family routines.
Be consistent.

3 Simplify family routines at high-stress times.

4 “Special Time”—Have one thing a week that you look forward to doing with your family.

5 Take care of yourself.

Support Network Form

All of us need support from others. When we have small children, the wider our circle of support, the easier it is to manage! Let's give some thought to our own network.

Who can you call on the phone at least once a week for a friendly talk?

Who can you call when you have a problem with the baby or your young child?

Who will take your children for a while during the daytime?

Who will baby-sit for an evening?

Who do you enjoy an activity with? (For example, shooting hoops, watching a video, going shopping, taking a walk.)

Who can you call when you're upset?

Who might want to do something fun with you and your children?

Who will visit at your home or invite you over?

Who will go with your family for an outing?

Who will help with practical matters, like house problems, mechanical difficulties, etc.?

Who provides support for you? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Longtime friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People from work | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church members | <input type="checkbox"/> Another group I belong to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Out-of-town friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner's family | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner's friends |



“Special Time” Activity Cards

Use these “Special Time” Activity Cards with the Home Activity on Page 12. Photocopy the cards onto heavy paper and cut them apart. Prepare enough cards for each parent to receive two.

I, _____
will _____
at least once this week with my child.

I, _____
will _____
as a nurturing activity for myself at
least once this week.

Make Parenting A Pleasure

I, _____
will _____
at least once this week with my child.

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