

# COPING WITH STRESS

Stress is a state of mental and emotional strain when you are under pressure. Stress can make you feel tired or run-down. This can make it hard to carry out the things you need to do each day. Not all stress is bad, but stress that is ongoing (chronic stress) is harmful to your physical and mental health.

**Chronic stress** can make it hard to focus, remember things, and solve problems. You can work on managing your stress so that it will be easier to take care of your grandchild. Start by finding out what is making you feel stressed. Next, choose a healthy way to deal with your stress. This is called a **positive coping skill**. Practice your positive coping skills. Doing this can improve your health, quality of life, and daily routine with your grandchild.



## HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

When you are stressed...

- **Walk away.** Remove yourself from the stressful situation. Exercise, listen to music, or simply take a break until you feel calm again.
- **Breathe deeply.** Take several slow deep breaths in and out. This will help lower your blood pressure and reduce anxiety. Breathing can prevent muscle pain and aches caused by stress and increase your energy levels.
- **Stretch your neck,** stand or sit up straight. Get some tension out of your body.



## GET ACTIVE

Physical activity can improve mood, sleep, and overall health. Exercise also helps lower anxiety, depression, and fatigue. Find affordable fitness classes at your local community center, watch a yoga video online, or simply take a walk to feel better.

## GET CONNECTED

Find people in your community to talk to. There are other grandparents that will understand what you are going through. Finding social support protects you from many negative health symptoms including stress, depression, and anxiety. Take the time to build relationships with others.

## BREATHING EXERCISES

Controlled breathing is a relaxation technique and positive way to cope with daily stressors. Deep breathing sends a message to the brain to calm down and relax. Breathing is simple and can be done anywhere, but it takes practice. You can learn to use breathing to manage stress by practicing 2-3 times per day.

### PURSED LIP BREATHING

- With relaxed shoulders, take a normal breath in for 2 counts
- Then pucker your lips (like you're blowing out birthday candles) and breath out (exhale) for 4 counts
- Do this for 4 rounds

### SQUARE BREATHING

- Start by breathing in (inhale) for 4 counts
- Hold for 4 counts
- Breathe out (exhale) for 4 counts
- Hold empty for 4 counts
- Continue these steps for 4 rounds

Ties That Bind is a program of the Jessie F. Richardson Foundation. With this program, we aim to connect grandparents and kinship caregivers with the resources they need.

Visit us at <http://tiesthatbindor.org/> for more.