

5 Top Tips for Dealing with Stressful Situations at Home

1. If it is possible and safe, move yourself away from the situation causing the stress.

When we are in stressful situations our bodies and minds go into a state of 'fight-flight-freeze.' We do not have control over our minds in 'fight-flight-freeze' mode. This human response exists to protect us in dangerous situations, however, it can feel unhelpful when there is no immediate threat. By walking away from stressful situations, we give our bodies and minds the opportunity to move out of this state allowing us to feel calmer and respond more appropriately.

2. Take control of you breathing.

There are many reasons why you may not be able to move away from the situations causing you stress. If this is the case, try to control you breathing.

When we control our breathing, we are better able to control our heart rate and the supply of oxygen reaching our brains. This may help us to manage our emotions and think more clearly.

Try breathing in for a count of 4, holding for a count of 6 and breathing out for a count of 8.

Repeat this until you feel you are breathing more deeply.

3. Move your body.

Stress can manifest itself as energy in our bodies. It can make us feel like we are going to explode. By finding an alternative outlet for this energy, we are able to take control of those challenging feelings, helping ourselves to feel calmer and more in control. If you and members of your household are healthy, why not try going for a walk? Alternatively, you might like to try some jumping jacks, running on the spot or carrying something heavy.

4. Drawing or Writing

Drawing or writing down the way we are feeling can be a helpful way to manage those feelings and move past them. These drawings or pieces of writing can also be a useful tool in sharing our feelings with others. By sharing our drawings and writings we are able to share a part of our inner world. This can be helpful for others to understand us, helping to reduce further conflicts. This can also be helpful tool in supporting your child's understanding of emotions.

5. Have a plan

Having a plan in place for when you're feeling overwhelmed can be a very helpful tool for you and others. If you have a plan in place you do not have to try and think rationally in the moment. You already know what to do which can help you to feel calmer and more confident in the moment. You might like to have the plan up on the wall or fridge so you can refer to it when you need to. Why not write a plan with some of the suggestions above? There is an example of this on the next page.

PS. Taking care of yourself will help you to feel more able to manage stressful situations. Why not take a look at **5 Top Tips for Self-Care**

Example plan

This is a plan that might be helpful for when your child is demonstrating challenging behaviour and you are feeling overwhelmed by the situation.

Step 1 – Ensure my child is safe

Step 2 – Breathe in for 4, hold for 6, out for 8 and remember what caused the original feeling

Step 3 – Draw how I am feeling now and why

Step 4 – Share step 3 with my child, are they feeling the same?

Step 5 – Hold my child's hands and gently squeeze saying

‘feeling ____ is ok. We are safe. We are here together.’

If you don't manage to follow all the steps do NOT worry. It takes time to get used to new habits. You're doing really well by simply trying.

Try it a few more times and if the plan isn't working try adapting and changing it until it feels right for you.