

# De-stressing During The Teen Years

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Feeling stressed is common for parents and caregivers when managing work and family relationships. The teen years might be especially stressful for you, particularly if you have difficulties with a teen. Caring for a teen can be difficult. A teenager who engages in challenging behaviors puts more stress on parents or caregivers.

In this newsletter, we will give you ideas on how to reduce stress and take care of yourself. Focusing on your personal well-being is important so you can handle challenging behaviors and other aspects of your teen's life. Teens do better when parents minimize stress in family life. We will give you tips to enhance your physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs. This newsletter also contains a list of 30 things you can do with your teen to de-stress and have a moment of fun.

## Physical Needs and Reducing Stress

You have many activities you can do to relieve stress and take care of your physical health. This is especially important during stressful times because these activities will make handling difficult situations easier for you. Also, better physical health gives you the energy and balance you need to engage children in a positive way.

Physical activities help lower any anxiety, anger, depression or frustration you might have in your life. Doing a physical activity often

will help you respond better to your teen, feel calm and relaxed, and have more patience. Do you have enough physical activity in your life to maintain good health and reduce stress? Recommendations at [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov) on the Internet suggest adults should work up to exercising for 30 minutes each day, or if you already engage in high-intensity physical activities, then you should do this for at least 20 minutes on three or more days a week. Young people and teens should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderately intensive activity every day. Go to [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for more information on physical activity.

### Here are a few tips for meeting your physical needs:

- Eat healthy and nutritious meals
- Exercise on a regular basis (daily if possible)
- Get plenty of sleep (seven or more hours for adults, eight or more hours for teens)
- Avoid too much television (no more than two hours in a day)
- Walk or bike to work if possible
- Take a bath or shower to relax

## **SPIRITUAL NEEDS** and Reducing Stress

Meeting your spiritual needs as a parent or caregiver also can be important. Attending to your spiritual needs can furnish hope, comfort, encouragement and inspiration. Some people also find the values that guide their parenting are shaped from their spiritual needs, so considering spiritual needs can be a good reminder of principles by which to live.

**Here are some activities to help you take care of your spiritual needs:**

- Visit a natural area of beauty
- Go to a museum or art event
- Meditate or pray
- Join a social group or volunteer in service to others
- Listen to relaxing music
- Attend and participate in worship services or community activities you value
- Participate in volunteer work
- Watch a sunrise or sunset
- Express yourself to a friend and talk about your beliefs or values

## **EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS** and Reducing Stress

Parents and caregivers should seek ways to have their emotional and social needs fulfilled. Often, you may spend so much time focusing on work, responding to family concerns or taking care of others' emotional needs, you neglect your own needs, which can take a toll on you. Taking care of emotional and social needs gives caregivers a chance to relax, vent and take care of themselves.

**Here are some activities that can help you take care of your emotional and social needs:**

- Spend time with old friends.
- Spend some time alone – do an activity you enjoy or read a book
- Have fun with old and new friends – listen and laugh together.
- Spend the weekend away with a friend or partner.
- Talk with friends or co-workers to get help with the stress in your life.
- Focus on an activity you enjoy, such as gardening or cooking.
- Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal.

## **INTELLECTUAL NEEDS** and Reducing Stress

Meeting your intellectual needs can help you focus on what is happening in your own mind. To stop thinking about family concerns and begin thinking about what is going on in the world or a particular topic can be nice. Just getting away for a moment from the mental chaos that comes into your home or work can be helpful.

**Here are some possible activities that can help you with your intellectual needs:**

- Go to the library and find an interesting book or magazine.
- Learn something new that you've wanted to know more about.
- Listen to radio programs.
- Talk with other people about common interests.
- Read newspapers, magazines or journals.
- Write what you have learned in a journal.
- Teach something to your teen or friends.

# 30 Ways to De-stress With Your Teenager

*Here is a list of activities you can do with your teen. Some will help you de-stress and meet your physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual needs. Some are just for fun. Make doing all of these things together a goal – check them off.*

- Exercise with a DVD
- Go thrift store shopping
- Look through photographs together
- Study your family tree together
- Make your favorite dessert
- Walk your dog together, or go to the Humane Society and take a dog for a walk
- Swap chores for the week
- Watch a movie together
- Listen to your teen's favorite music
- Go for a bike ride together
- Go swimming at a local pool, lake or beach
- Play volleyball, basketball or another sport together
- Start a collection of something, such as leaves, coins or stamps
- Go on a picnic together at the park
- Tie a quilt together
- Go out at night and identify stars and constellations
- Put together a family scrapbook
- Visit a local nature trail or preserve
- Go hiking together
- Read the same book or series and discuss it
- Plan meals together for the week
- Play board games
- Go out for pizza
- Go for a walk together
- Ask for your teen's opinion
- Set aside special time to talk about your teen's day
- Do a project at home together
- Take your teen to his/her favorite place
- Give daily praise and positive comments to your teen
- Have family meetings to discuss problems

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**Don't forget to ask your teen what he or she would like to do to relieve stress.**

**You might do these activities now or at a time that better suits your relationship and needs.**

**Either way, focusing on learning to relax, having fun together and reducing the stress that is common in family life is important.**

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## Conclusion

If these suggestions are not working for your family, seek additional help through other resources. Valuable resources include your support systems, such as family, friends, neighbors and community professionals. Helpful information always is available in books, newsletters and classes, and through family counseling or therapy. Counseling can provide families with additional tools to overcome difficult times.

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## Helpful Phone Numbers

### North Dakota Helpline

211 or (800) 472-2911

### Badlands Human Service Center

(888) 277-7525

Or call your NDSU Extension Service county office to find phone numbers for agencies that can assist you.

\* Regional Parent Resource Centers with the NDSU Extension Service also have information on phone numbers of other agencies to assist you. A local NDSU Extension agent can provide information to you.

The mental health associations or departments in each state can provide you with resources or locations of mental health professionals, or answer your questions.

- Mental Health Association of **North Dakota**,  
(479) 255-3692  
Web site: [www.mhand.org/](http://www.mhand.org/)
- Mental Health Association of **Minnesota**,  
(612) 331-6840  
Web site: [www.mentalhealthmn.org/](http://www.mentalhealthmn.org/)
- Mental Health Association of **Montana**,  
(406) 727-6642  
Web site: [www.mhamontana.org/](http://www.mhamontana.org/)
- Division of Mental Health **South Dakota**,  
(605) 773-5991  
Web site: [www.state.sd.us/dhs/dmh/  
MentalHealthResources.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/dhs/dmh/MentalHealthResources.htm)

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## References

Reeves, E.L. *Benefits of busy parents practicing self-care*. Retrieved Oct. 11, 2005, from <http://library.adoption.com/single-parent/benefits-of-busy-parents-practicing-self-care/article/3232/1.html>.

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