

Parenting Matters

PARTNERS IN PARENTING

Quarterly Newsletter

October 1999

For Colorado Parents

Colorado State University



Keeping it together



Types and sources of stress

Reactions to stress

Stress is your body's reaction to the demands of work, family and personal life. Life changes and traumatic events can also cause stress.

When faced with stressful situations, your heart beats faster, your mouth gets dry, your palms get clammy, your muscles tense and you perspire. Researchers estimate that stress is linked to 65% to 90% of all illness and disease. If you take too long to deal with stress, your body stays in a charged state. After a time,

it can literally make you sick!

It is important to learn about stress because parenting can be very stressful. When parents are under stress, it can affect the family. Stress is a natural part of life and learning to handle stress is vital to the health and happiness of your family.

Mismanaged stress can affect the immune system, heart functioning, hormone levels, the nervous system, memory and thinking and physical condition and metabolic rate. It can cause blood cholesterol, blood

pressure and acid levels to rise which can increase the risk of ulcers, hypertension, heart disease, cancer and even the common cold. Too much stress can wear you down physically and emotionally.

The things that stress you are different from the things that stress others. You handle it in your own "unique" way. The following issues are common stressors in many households. It is important to be aware that these can cause stress in a family.



The Chill Drill

Take control of your anger

1. **CHILL** - As soon as you notice your anger triggers and signs, tell yourself to **CHILL**. That is your cue to pay attention to what is happening in your body and mind so that you can begin to calm and take control. **CHILL** also reminds you that you have choices about how to respond to anger.

2. **BLOW** - When you are faced with a disturbing, tense or scary situation, your breathing changes: you may briefly hold your breath, or your breathing may become rapid and shallow. **CHILL** is your cue to take a balloon breath.

When you blow up a balloon, you use strong, steady balloon breaths. this helps you return to normal breathing.

3. **FACE** - It's the look on your face that tells others how you really feel. Make a positive face. Try to smile. Your face's muscles signal your brain to start your body's natural calming abilities.

4. **SPACE** - We all have a personal comfort zone. When you are angry, it's important to give your self and others plenty of space. Maintain your comfort zone and have a relaxed posture.

- Poor understanding of developmental stages of children can result in high expectations
- Behavior problems with children
- Lack of support from family, friends and the community
- The myth of the "perfect family"
- Uncertainty of parenting skills and low self-esteem
- Problems involving work, money or illness

Stress can have a good side too. Stress is a great motivator and positive force for change. A positive outlook on life and a healthy, active body are key factors in how we respond to stress. Learning how to cope with stress means learning how to define it, confront it and doing something about it.

— Courtesy of James W. Sipes

—Compiled from Partnership for a Drug Free America website

divorce **Stress** **Money** **Questions** **Budget** **matters** **Children** **Visitation**

For Parents:

Overcome Challenges

Divorce brings people into situations that may be completely new to them. Some challenges you may face include:

Learning to Live Alone

Being on one's own can be demanding after years of marriage. Activities may seem boring and there may be too much work for one person. It is easy to become isolated and takes a conscious effort to find new, comfortable patterns. In order to make the process easier, you can:

- Keep in touch with friends and family.
- Join a support group or seek counseling
- Use you time to pursue interests

Rasing Children Alone

Divorce often leaves less time for children, just when they need more attention and affection. New adjustments in family life and responsibilities may be needed. Discuss these changes openly.

Making Ends Meet

Money may be a problem now that there are two homes. Plan a budget and stick to priorities. Get advice in money management.

Managing a Social Life

Divorced people will eventually want to socialize and meet new people. This may cause problems with children, but having fun can make it easier to cope with everyday problems.

Helping children cope

Divorce can be painful for children, but not necessarily worse than life in an unhappy home.

Parents' attitudes make an immense difference. Both parents should try to maintain their relationship with the children and should never expect the children to take sides in the divorce. Parents should continue to follow the normal routine when possible. Other major changes such as changing schools should be limited to provide stability.

Communication is the key to keeping children happy and healthy during a divorce. Parents should explain events simply and honestly to each child and should reassure them that both parents will continue to care. Children should be encouraged to talk about their feelings about the divorce. Also, they should be allowed to ask questions and expect to receive honest answers.

What children understand about divorce varies with age:

Preschoolers (ages 2 to 4) often become insecure, dependent and demanding. They may fear the loss of their home, abandonment from parents and even feel responsible for the divorce.

School Children (ages 5 to 8) may feel abandoned, intensely insecure and sad. School and social performance may suffer. Conflicts with loyalty to parents can intensify problems.

Young Adolescents (ages 9 to 11) understand the situation better, but may feel very angry toward the parent they think "caused" the divorce. They may feel ashamed or have problems with sleeping, health, friends and school.

Adolescents (ages 12 to 18) frequently withdraw from the family, asserting their independence as a way of coping. They may worry about the emotional and financial affects of the divorce.

—Compiled from *About Divorce*, Channing Bete

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Family and Social Service Agencies
Psychologists and Family Therapists
Mediation Services
Members of the Clergy
Local Institutions may have support groups



*The more you know about divorce, the better you'll able to cope with the changes it brings.

Parenting Matters

Published quarterly by
Partners in Parenting,
Colorado State University
Cooperative Extension.

Program Coordinator: Chris Whaley

Editor:

Brooke Baldwin

Questions or comments?
Call us at (800) 457-2736

Tobacco: Advertising increases use, Colorado's tobacco settlement decisions

Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides. Thousands more die from tobacco related causes, such as other forms of tobacco use, fires caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.

The U.S. Surgeon General issued a report, which concluded that cigarettes and other forms of tobacco are addicting, and that nicotine is the drug in tobacco that causes addiction. In addition, the report stated that smoking is the third-leading cause of death in the United States. Despite this warning, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse shows that more than 50 million Americans continue to smoke cigarettes, making nicotine one of the country's most used addicting drugs.

Each day, more than 3,000 kids become regular smokers. Since 1991, smoking for longer than a month has increased by one-third among eighth graders and tenth graders. Smoking among high school seniors reached a 19-year high of 36.5 percent in 1997 and is currently at 35.1 percent.

There is compelling evidence that much of the advertising and promotion of tobacco companies is directed at kids and that these efforts are very successful in recruiting new tobacco users to years of addiction:

- 86 percent of kids who smoke prefer Marlboro, Camel and

Newport - the three most heavily advertised brands; only about one-third of adult smokers choose these brands. Marlboro, the most heavily advertised brand, constitutes almost 60 percent of the youth market but only about 25 percent of the adult market.

- A study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that teens are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette advertising than they are by peer pressure.

- Almost 90 percent of adults who have ever

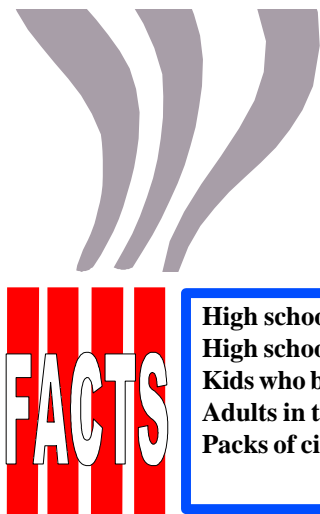
diseases include heart and cardiovascular disease; cancers of the lung, larynx, esophagus and bladder; emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

When the states settled their cases, they promised that the settlement was just the first step in their efforts to reduce tobacco use, particularly among children. Through their Attorneys General, the states said that the money from the tobacco companies would be used to reduce tobacco use, even though the agreement they had just signed did not dictate how to spend the money.

In Colorado, the tobacco industry is required to pay an initial amount of \$32.9 million. Each year following, Colorado will receive a payment between \$87.9 and \$115 million. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates the

annual cost of an effective, comprehensive tobacco prevention program for the state to be between \$24 and \$61 million.

Although exact information is difficult to obtain, Colorado currently spends little or no state funds on tobacco prevention. Governor Bill Owens did not include any funding for tobacco prevention in his proposal for using Colorado's tobacco settlement funds. The Governor proposed using 40 percent for education, 20 percent for children's health, 10 percent for the University of Colorado Medical School's capital construction needs and the remaining 30 percent for an



High school students who smoke:	36%
High school males who use smokeless tobacco:	25%
Kids who become new regular smokers each day:	3,000+
Adults in the USA who smoke:	23%
Packs of cigarettes illegally sold to kids each year:	500 million

been regular smokers began smoking at or before age 18.

- 30 percent of kids (12 to 17 years old), both smokers and nonsmokers, own at least one tobacco promotional item, such as T-shirts, backpacks, and CD players.

Last November, 46 states settled the cases they had filed against the tobacco companies. When the states first filed suit against the tobacco companies, they said they were doing so to prevent another generation of children from becoming addicted to tobacco and to reduce the amount of money their citizens were spending to treat tobacco-caused disease. These

tobacco continued from page 3

endowment fund with no stated purpose.

Senator Norma Anderson (R) introduced a legislative proposal, Senate Bill 132, for using the funds to expand the state's home nursing program, increase the number of school nurses, support existing state mental health responsibilities and tobacco prevention. The bill does not set specific funding minimum for tobacco prevention. Other than a five percent allocation for administrative costs related to managing the settlement funds, Senator Anderson's proposal forces all programs to compete for funding through the legislative appropriations process.

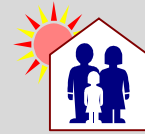
—Compiled from *Partnership for a Drug Free America* website

Are you helping your teen say "No" to drugs and alcohol?

Here is a quiz to help you determine if you are helping your teen say "no". Give yourself five points for things you usually do, zero for things you never do or any score in between.

1. I know where my teen goes, and who he/she goes with.
2. If my teen says he/she is going to a party, I call to make sure parents will be there.
3. I ask my teen to invite his/her friends over to "hang out" when I am home.
4. I encourage my teen to take part in extracurricular activities.
5. We try to do things as a family.

More than 20= excellent
15 to 19= average
Below 15= you may need to work harder to get your teen to say "no".



Fast Facts for Families

Rules of thumb for talking with your kids about anything

1. Create an open environment
2. Consider your child's temperament
3. Respect your child's feelings
4. Understand the question
5. Always be honest
6. If you don't know, admit it
7. Don't leave big gaps
8. Use age appropriate language
9. Get feedback
10. Be patient
11. Say it again and again
12. Give your undivided attention
13. Speak separately to kids of different ages



This program fully funded by:

Colorado State University
Cooperative Extension
134 Aylesworth Hall NW
Fort Collins, CO 80523
(800) 457-2736



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