

Parenting

Imagine that you are on a boat, sailing in the ocean, when the water begins to get choppy. You haven't sailed much before so, of course you don't know how to sail the boat yourself. As the boat begins to rock back and forth, faster and faster, your stomach begins to feel funny. You go to find the captain to ask what you can do to feel better. However, when you find him, he and the first mate are arguing over where to go and who should steer. As you look outside, you see that the boat is headed for some rocks, but neither the captain nor the first mate will stop yelling long enough to listen to you and steer the boat to safety.

How might you feel?

This is how many children feel when their parents are unable to work together in parenting. They may feel scared, worried, sad, angry and/or frustrated. After all, children depend on their parents or caregivers to provide a safe, predictable environment where they feel nurtured and supported – a place where the child's feelings are listened to and regarded as important. However, when parents are having difficult times themselves, as a couple or individually, they are often not able to provide the type of home that they and the children would thrive in. As a parent's stress becomes overwhelming, it is natural to pay less attention to their children's needs and feelings. It becomes impossible to do their best job as a parent when they are barely holding things together for themselves.

For this reason, one of the best things that you, as a parent, can do for your children is to take care of yourself! By preventing yourself from becoming "stressed out" you will have more patience with your children. You will be able to focus more on positives with your children and have more energy to manage the stress of parenting responsibilities. This will also increase how much you enjoy your life and your relationship with your children.

Remember, professional help is available if your support system is not helping you cope as well as you would like to.

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