

Press Release from Child Guidance Resource Centers
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Proven Techniques for Developing Patience and Managing Stress

In the best of times, with the best of kids, the best of parents can lose their patience and snap at an undeserving family member. There is a reason sitcoms for decades have used the trope of TV-moms exhaustedly handing boisterous children off to fathers as soon as they arrive home from work. So what happens when parents find themselves at home 24/7 with their kids in the middle of an international pandemic?

In these unusual circumstances, we are all a little overwhelmed. And we are all at least a little stressed. We can expect that our nerves are on edge and patience is short. But before we get to the point of losing our tempers, there are some steps we can take.

First and foremost, be gentle with yourself. Recognize that you are doing the very best you can, and so are the people in your home. When you feel tension rising, remind yourself that this too shall pass, and that all the things you are doing really truly are making the passing come sooner.

Next, consider making a personal safety plan for yourself and maybe every member of your household. This is actually a proven tool used in [the Sanctuary model](#) that helps reduce violence, trauma, and anger in systems, and every family is a system. It's easy! Think of 3 things you can do, by yourself, within a minute or two, that will help make you feel just a little bit better or calmer. Then, write them down (I mean it! It really helps to write them out). These can be simple things, like listening to your favorite song, or turning on the shower in the bathroom and yelling at the top of your lungs, washing your face with cool water, having a cup of tea, rubbing lotion on your chapped hands, or going outside for just a minute of fresh air. Some people pray or read a favorite poem or verse, stretch or take a quick stroll.

My safety plan says, "look at the sky, roll your shoulders, sing something, anything!" In truth, I use them all depending on where I am and what I need, and they really help! It's especially beneficial for children to make these, too. You can put post-its or tape them to the fridge, and when kids are getting rammy, refer them to their safety plan! Making the plans also gives you a chance to talk to your children about the temporary, but strange, time we are living in, and give them reassurance.

Other techniques for relieving stress are sometimes challenging when you are working from home and have the kids around but all are worth a try! The goal is to quickly release tension, and shift your focus so you can better relax. Here are some proven ones:

- Get dressed in the morning. Wear something you like.
- Take several **4-7-8 breaths**: inhale for a count of 4, hold for 7, and exhale for 8.
- Get some good smells into your home. You can burn a candle, diffuse essential oils, or cook cinnamon in a pot of water on the stove.
- 15 minutes of movement of your choice.
- Try five slow wall push-ups to release that stress from **your shoulders**. Deep muscle compression is good for everyone!

Another technique that can help you stay relaxed when the day seems eternal is to punctuate your day with some surprise activities. All you need is the timer on your phone (or anywhere else). The joy is that you get to decide when it's time for a break and they can feel fun for your children too. Try these:

- Suddenly play the Quiet Game, set your timer for 60 seconds and then nobody talks until the timer rings, ready-set-go!
- Set an alarm and announce, "Outside for 5!" Make everyone hurry outside, and then you can let the 5 turn into 10 if things are going well. (Just no communal playground time).
- Set an alarm and announce it's time to drop everything and clean! This should be for no more than 5 minutes, and everyone runs around and picks up as fast as they can.
- If you are struggling getting your kids off screens, you can also do a drop everything and read for 10-20 minutes.

Finally, take a note from Elsa, and Let It Go. It's ok if things are a little loose right now, and the toys are all over or the kids are still in their pajamas at lunch. Some days are just going to be like that. You are a good parent, you have good children, and you are a pioneer. You are successfully navigating a new, but temporary, world. Give yourself credit – you deserve it.

About the author: Tiiu Lutter is the Director of Development at Child Guidance and a Family Therapist who specializes in intra-family relationships, couples and adolescent concerns. With a degree from Immaculata University, Tiiu has her degree in counseling and school guidance. She has been an IEP consultant and educational advocate and is certified in secondary guidance. She has experience working with trauma, loss, and multi-generational family issues. She believes that every child, regardless of age, seeks to connect to their parents (and vice versa), and that with support, couples can find their way through almost every challenge, and thrive as a result.