

# Coping with Stress of Parenting a Child with Chronic Health Issues

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# Today's Plan

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- Stress and parenting stress
- Risk factors and protective factors for coping
- Coping strategies to consider
- Resources



# Identifying Stressors

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- Getting specific
- Distress vs. Eustress
- Different tiers of environmental stressors

# Parenting a Child with Chronic Health Issues

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- Requires high levels of emotional engagement and personal commitment (Meier and Beresford, 2006)
- May be associated with increased caregiver stress, feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and lack of hope (Wenzel et al., 2011)

# Risk factors for coping difficulties

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- Disease characteristics
- Functional independence of child
- Perceived stress
  - “Daily hassles” vs. major life events

# Protective factors for healthy coping

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## How people cope with stress

- Appraisal of events
- Problem-focused strategies
- Emotion-focused strategies



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# Protective factors for healthy coping

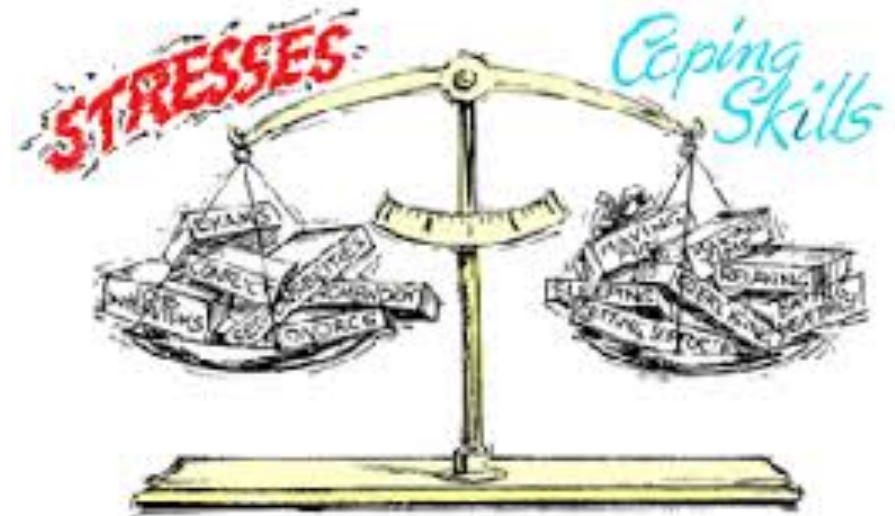
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## Personal factors

- Pre-morbid functioning
- Locus of control

## Social/environmental factors

- Family functioning
- Social support
- Parental adjustment
- Resources



# *Coping Strategies to Consider*



# Self-care

- Health Behaviors
- Caring for body and mind
- Rewarding yourself



From Unite Mental Health

# Emotion regulation

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- Many different emotions can arise when parenting youth with chronic illness
- Relationship between emotions and rational thoughts
- Recognizing and regulating emotions
  - Being mindful of feelings and behavior
  - Choose a strategy for short-term emotion regulation
  - Practice strategies for longer-term help with emotion regulation



# Thinking about your thinking

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Negative/positive thoughts happen - Do you realize when they do?

What are you telling yourself about a situation?

- Are those thoughts true?
- Are those thoughts helpful?

Reframing to positive or neutral

# I CANNOT CONTROL

(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

IF OTHERS  
FOLLOW THE  
RULES OF SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

THE AMOUNT  
OF TOILET  
PAPER AT THE  
STORE

## I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

THE  
ACTIONS  
OF  
OTHERS

MY POSITIVE  
ATTITUDE

TURNING  
OFF THE  
NEWS

FINDING FUN  
THINGS TO DO  
AT HOME

HOW  
LONG  
THIS  
WILL  
LAST

HOW I FOLLOW CDC  
RECOMMENDATIONS

MY OWN SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

LIMITING MY  
SOCIAL MEDIA

PREDICTING  
WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN

MY KINDNESS &  
GRACE

HOW  
OTHERS  
REACT

OTHER  
PEOPLE'S  
MOTIVES



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TheCounselingTeacher.com

# Decision Making (Emily Oster, PhD)

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1. Frame the question
2. Mitigate risk
3. Evaluate risk
4. Evaluate benefits
5. Decide

Test period (if possible) and re-evaluate decision

# Putting the Illness in its Place

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Chronic illness may lead to tough situations, which offer learning opportunities

Not “letting go” or “moving on”

Giving permission to keep tough situations in a mental space

Allowing opportunities for non-illness related thoughts and activities

# *Resources to Consider*



# Resources

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Individual, family, couples therapy

- CHOP
- Local resources

Support groups

Advocacy





# Final Thoughts

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Coping is within your control and takes practice.

Remember to take care of yourself!

Consider things that may be helpful, including managing emotions, thoughts, behavior.

Outside resources may be useful in coordination with regular consultation with the medical team.