



## Parenting in times of stress

# Looking after yourself

By looking after yourself, you will be better prepared to look after your children.

### 1 You are not alone

Remember that parents around the world share your worries and concerns. Talk about how you are feeling with someone who understands, and listen to their anxieties. Remember social media can add to feelings of anxiety, so try to limit your phone time.

### 2 Take a break

Give yourself the chance to unwind while your children are asleep. Do an activity you find enjoyable—like reading a book or learning a new skill—or simply take the time to relax.

### 3 Listen carefully

Your children look to you for support and reassurance. Ask them how they are, listen to what they have to say, understand how they are feeling and offer comfort.

### 4 One-minute relaxation

When you are feeling stressed, follow these simple steps:

#### 1 Prepare

- Find a comfortable sitting position, with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting on your lap
- Close your eyes if you want to

#### 2 Notice

- Focus on what you are thinking in that moment—are your thoughts negative or positive?
- Pay attention to the emotions you are experiencing—you might be feeling you sad, fearful or angry
- Notice what's going on in your body—do you feel discomfort or are you tense?

#### 3 Breathe

- Listen to your breath as it goes in and out—you can place one hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall each time you inhale and exhale
- You might find it soothing to say some reassuring words to yourself
- Continue to listen to your breath for a while and allow yourself to relax

#### 4 Reflect

- When you are ready to carry on with your day, start to notice how your body feels and tune into the sounds around you
- Think about how you are feeling now—is it different to how you were feeling at the beginning of this relaxation activity?

You might find this one-minute relaxation activity is especially helpful when you feel frustrated or overwhelmed—perhaps when your child is misbehaving and you want to deal with the situation in a calm way. Remember that a few deep breaths can make a huge difference to how you are feeling.

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These evidence-based parenting resources were developed by Parenting for Lifelong Health in collaboration with [UNICEF, WHO, and other international agencies](#).