
STRESS

With the busy lifestyles of families, stress seems to be prevalent. Stress can mean different things to different people and can include situations such as moving house, getting married, coping with bereavement, unemployment and of course family issues. When a parent is feeling under too much pressure not only does it affect the individual but it influences what happens in the family.

It should be said that a certain level of stress can help to motivate us into getting things done. However it is important to be aware when our stress levels are affecting our ability to function in the way we usually do.

Some of the signs to look out for are irritability, anxiety, lack of interest or lack of concentration. A stressed person can suffer from aches and pains, disruptive sleep patterns and lose their appetite.

As stress can build up gradually, it may be some time before the parent realises that they are feeling under pressure and need help.

Parents need to look after themselves and pay attention to their own needs if they are to be able to give enough to their children and to adult relationships.

Sometimes parents will say to us at PAC 'I'm taking it out on the children'. Naturally they feel very guilty about that. So if you are feeling more than the normal strain of everyday life take some time to consider what you can do about it.

Some tips may be to find time for yourself, to look into ways to help you relax, talk to someone about any worries, pinpoint the situations you find stressful, reduce the demands on you, take more exercise and know where you can get the sort of support that will help you. Parents have a lot of responsibility. We can only be good enough parents if we are feeling up to the task.

Q

My niece has a young family of three boys who are all in primary school. They are a handful but adorable. She has got snappy and bad tempered which is not a bit like her. She used to be very house-proud but now she doesn't care so much. She has no help near at hand and her mother died long before she was married.

A

It is hard to say what might have caused this change in your niece. What does seem to be the case is that she is not herself. Children quickly pick up any change and no doubt these boys have sensed that their mother is not herself.

If the family are living a very busy lifestyle she could be feeling the strain. Alternatively there may have been other triggers to cause the alteration in her mood. Either way she needs help. Find a time when you can talk to her sympathetically, encouraging her to tell you or her husband what is troubling her. While her well-being is important we need to remember that there are three children in that family and their welfare is paramount.

