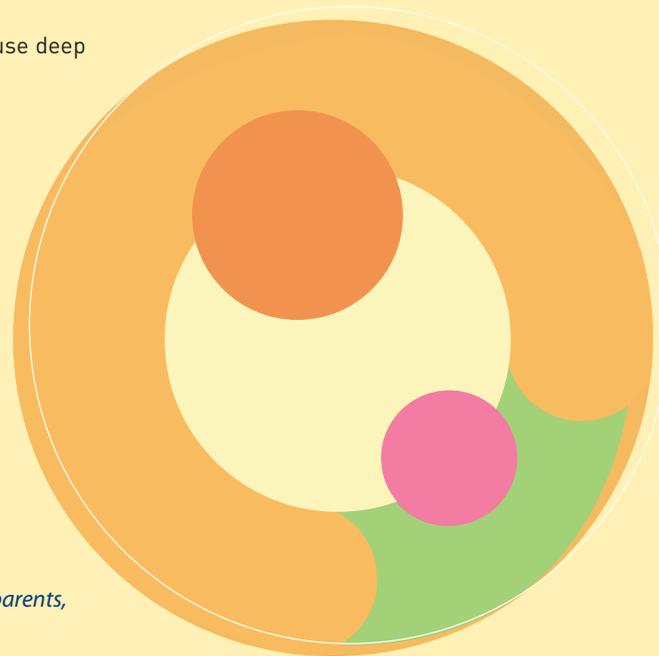




- **Exercise and do physical activities on a regular basis.** Exercise is wonderful for physical and emotional well-being, and it does not have to be strenuous. Try walking for 20-30 minutes three times a week. Other ideas include climbing stairs, dancing, gardening or joining your toddler as she explores the outdoors.
- **Keep your adult relationships healthy.** Young children are quick to pick up on adult moods. The atmosphere in the home affects your child's ability to grow and prosper. When you have conflicts in your home, try to resolve them peacefully so that your child is not afraid. Friends, counselors or parent organizations in your community can help you with life's challenges – do not be afraid to use them!
- **Recognize stress.** Learning how to manage stress is one of life's challenges! Stress increases when people are worried, going through big changes, or have too many demands on their time and energy. Young children can sense your stress and become anxious or upset. Some of the signs of stress include headaches, feelings of hopelessness and discouragement, an urge to cry, and tight muscles in your stomach, neck or back. Be on the lookout for these signals.
- **Learn new ways to deal with stress.** Try counting to 10, use deep breathing, or give yourself a "time out" to calm down.
- **Focus on the positive.** The more you practice being positive, the better at it you become.
- **Keep learning and exploring.** Look for new information and skills that interest you.
- **Taking care of yourself can mean asking for help.** If you feel sad or angry most of the time or are struggling to get through the day contact your doctor, health care professional, clergy or call 2-1-1 Infoline. By managing your stress you are helping your child.

*TV and other video media are not substitutes for loving parents, family members, caregivers and friends.*



*If you are a parent, share this with your child's caregiver. If you are a caregiver, share this with the child's parent(s). Thank you!*

## CARE FOR YOURSELF

This brochure is the first in an eight-part series on fun and learning with your baby or toddler:

1. Care for Yourself
2. Cuddle, Talk, and Read with Your Child
3. How Your Child Develops
4. Be Playful with Your Child
5. Show Your Child the World
6. Teach Self Control
7. Practice Health and Safety
8. Healthy Eating

"Keys to Great Caregiving" has been adapted for use in Connecticut from "Keys To Great Parenting", University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

To request Keys brochures call 203-207-3267 or visit: [www.thekeys.uconn.edu](http://www.thekeys.uconn.edu)



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## CARE FOR YOURSELF



University of Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
*College of Agriculture & Natural Resources*

In partnership with 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline,  
Connecticut Department of Social Services,  
Danbury Children First, Inc., EDUCATION CONNECTION,  
New Haven School Readiness Council

## CARE FOR YOURSELF

Parenting is probably the hardest job you will ever have... and can be the most rewarding!

That is why caring for yourself is so important. When you take care of yourself, you are more likely to be a great parent – one who is loving and patient with your child.

Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. One of the best ways you teach is by your example – you are the model for your child.

Your child learns through your behavior – your words, gestures and actions.



### Making Time for Yourself

**Ideas to help keep your child safe and well cared for:**

- Exchange childcare with a neighbor, friend or relative.
- Search for a sitter. Get referrals from friends or neighbors. Meet with the sitter and get to know her before you leave your child. Write down information about your child's daily routines and preferences. Be sure to leave emergency information and a number where you can be reached.
- For referrals to child care providers, call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline.
- Other referral sources for child care include churches and other faith communities, community referral services, and social service agencies.



*Join a parenting class or a parent support group in your community.*

*When you find quality childcare that you trust, you will be able to enjoy some favorite activities and time with friends.*

### Tips to Care for Yourself

- **Make time for yourself.** Arrange for your child to be safe and well cared for, and then do something that you enjoy on a regular basis – pursue a hobby, read, listen to music, take a walk, or volunteer to do something you enjoy.
- **Share your feelings.** The challenges of parenting can be confusing. Support from others can be helpful. Talk about your feelings with someone who cares about you, listens well and offers helpful suggestions.
- **Keep a sense of humor.** Humor and laughter relax the body and renew energy. Seeing the funny side of life does wonders for emotional and physical health.
- **Celebrate what you do well.** It does not have to be a major accomplishment. Maybe you learned something new about parenting or finished something you set out to do.
- **Nourish your body.** Eat nutritious foods to be healthy and energetic. Every day most adults should be eating:
  - 6-10 servings from the grain group (bread, pasta, cereal, rice);
  - 3-5 servings from the vegetable group;
  - 2-4 servings from the fruit group;
  - 2-3 servings from the dairy group (milk, cheese, yogurt);
  - 2-3 servings from the protein group (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, nuts);Use fats, oils and sweets sparingly.
- **Stay away from drugs, alcohol and smoking.** These harm you and your child. Violent or abusive behaviors such as hitting, yelling and name-calling also harm you and your child.
- **Get enough sleep** for good physical and emotional health. Many parents with young children do not get enough sleep on a regular basis. Get into the habit of taking a nap when you can – when your child is napping or when someone else is caring for your child.
- **Plan for extra rest** on weekends. Try not to feel guilty about taking time away from your child so that you can rest. Great parenting means that you give the best care you can. Sometimes you must get your energy back first.
- **Develop a bedtime routine** for your family. It helps children to develop good sleep habits. Bedtime routines include activities such as bathing, reading, cuddling or other calming activities.



*If you are a parent, share this with your child's caregiver. If you are a caregiver, share this with the child's parent(s). Thank you!*