



# Welcome...

The purpose of this website is to provide easily accessible information to parents and caregivers of children who have complex conditions. Children with disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, and others, have many strengths as well as challenges. Often, children with a disability can become frustrated by their difficulty in communicating their needs. Some may have difficulty interpreting social cues while others may struggle with activities of daily living. What one child may learn easily through everyday activities may require more focused teaching for a child with a disability. With

help, your child can learn developmental skills, minimizing the challenging behaviours they may have used to meet their needs. Each child is unique, and there is no one approach that will work with every child. It is important to understand how to determine an approach that will work with an individual child. In this website you will learn how to find effective ways to support your child with a disability. This website was developed for parents who have children with disabilities. The website has drawn on their expertise and experience to develop a website that will suit your needs as a parent and as a family.

### **You will learn:**

- How to promote adaptive behaviours, learning and development
- How to understand the function of challenging behaviours
- Strategies to manage and minimize challenging behaviours
- How to work as part of a team
- How to work with your child's school team
- How to plan for important transitions
- How to stay healthy as a parent and as a family

This website is designed to be a resource you can turn to whether you have just ten minutes at a time or several hours. It is also designed to be flexible – you can skip the theory behind some of the strategies if you are already familiar with it, or you can read more about it to increase your understanding.

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Here is some information about the website design, content, and how to use it:

**This website:**

- has a tutorial to orient you to how the site works
- presents information in multiple ways to suit different learning styles. For example, many sections are narrated, but this can be skipped if preferred
- uses video to illustrate specific concepts discussed

*Includes a variety of interactivities to help you reflect on how to apply the strategies with your child.*

**The content:**

- covers the age range from preschool to 18 years
- covers the diverse range of skills that your child may have
- is focused on home settings
- includes a range of strategies that may apply to children with mildly challenging behaviours to those children with more severe and complex behaviours
- includes strategies that can be used while supporting children or youth in more natural settings such as home or the community

**This website may be used as:**

- a comprehensive guide that you can systematically work through
- a place to come when you have a specific question or issue that you would like to explore
- a resource to learn new strategies or review different strategies
- a guide when planning for the needs of your child and family

**Note:** before you start, be sure to take the website tutorial so that you don't miss any of the features.

# Unit 1

## Coping with Stress

Stress and strategies to stay emotionally fit

A certain amount of stress can keep us stimulated and lead to growth, but when we are not aware of our stress level or don't know how to manage it in healthy ways, it can be harmful to us physically and mentally. It can also make us less effective in our work. Learning how to manage stress and committing to an emotional fitness plan is just as important as learning how to support children.

Follow the link to the Canadian Mental Health website to read about stress and how it impacts you. Take the "What's your stress index?" Read through the ideas for preventing and coping with stress. Be sure to review the resources and the "stress stoppers". Consider what approaches might work best for you.

The Mayo Clinic has excellent information about stress and self-care. Click on the link and read through the site on stress. Be sure to read the section in Stress basics, on looking for patterns in your coping strategies. Read the strategies for stress relief.



## *Your Turn*

**In your journal, write about the following:**

- Your reflections on the results of the What's your stress index
- What are your stress triggers?
- What are your coping strategy patterns? How healthy are they?
- What are your telltale signs of increasing stress? (these likely include physical, mental, social & emotional responses)
- Of the five types of coping skills — physical, mental, social, diversions and spiritual — which are you already using?
- What new coping skills will you commit to trying next time you're feeling stressed?

Now, develop an emotional and mental fitness management plan, including strategies to prevent stress and manage it when it occurs.

Follow it to enjoy a rewarding career and a healthy, balanced life!

**For more information check out these links online:**

Canadian Mental Health Association:

[http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=2-28-30&lang=1](http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=2-28-30&lang=1)

The Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435>