

# Spring-Back Strategies



## Tips from Parents who deal daily with stress

Parents and carers of children with SEN and/or disabilities often deal daily with stress. So, we asked them for their own experience and tips on stress, anxiety and how they cope.

*This factsheet is not intended to replace expert medical advice; it is merely suggestions from parents and carers who have come up with some coping mechanisms to help them spring back. They may not all work for you, suit you or be possible for you. Hopefully, one or two will though.*

### Stress – The Symptoms

#### Cognitive Symptoms:

- o Memory problems
- o Inability to concentrate
- o Poor judgment
- o Seeing only the negative
- o Anxious or racing thoughts
- o Constant worrying

#### Emotional Symptoms:

- o Moodiness
- o Irritability or short temper
- o Agitation, inability to relax
- o Feeling overwhelmed
- o Sense of loneliness and isolation
- o Depression or general unhappiness

#### Physical Symptoms:

- o Aches and pains
- o Diarrhea or constipation
- o Nausea, dizziness
- o Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- o Loss of sex drive
- o Frequent colds

#### Behavioural Symptoms:

- o Eating more or less
- o Sleeping too much or too little
- o Isolating yourself from others
- o Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- o Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- o Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

The signs and symptoms of stress can also be caused by other psychological and medical problems. If you're experiencing any of the warning signs of stress, it's important to see a doctor for a full evaluation.

Many health problems are caused or exacerbated by stress, including:

- o Pain of any kind
- o Heart Disease
- o Digestive problems
- o Sleep problems
- o Depression
- o Obesity
- o Autoimmune diseases
- o Skin conditions (e.g. eczma) .

## How they recognise they are stressed:

- I get stress headaches/migraines
- My patience gets very thin
- I feel irritated at silly things, e.g. when the boys are not in bed asleep by 9pm (even though they are never in bed asleep by 9pm)
- I get very tearful and irritable, I sometimes even get physically ill, feel sick, etc
- I cry at anything and everything
- When putting out the washing (or other similar every day task) feels like a huge task
- When I can't see anything funny or positive in a situation
- My kids say it's when I resort to tantrums
- I honestly seem to get more grey hair
- I can't switch off when I go to bed
- I wake up in the middle of the night for no reason
- I itch my hands constantly
- I compulsively wash clothes. One load on, next load ready, have even sat and watched the washing machine waiting for it to finish so I can put the next load on
- I crave a cigarette - I gave up 21 years ago
- I crave chocolate – it's like a bad case of PMT

## Spring Back Strategies

### Social:

- Skype a friend who lives miles away and have one glass of wine with her so it feels like I am having a night out
- Palling up with a friend who "gets it" and booking an evening rant/phone call
- Keep in touch with friends – it's easy to become isolated when dealing with stress, but this can lead to depression so I make an effort to stay in touch
- Meet a friend for a swim
- Coffee with a friend who will just listen
- Having a friend I know I can call on at weekends – hate imposing at weekends
- Having a network of people available, even if only on FB
- I blog!
- When my children ask 1001 questions, I burst into song, that stops the questions

### Physical

- Gym membership
- Running
- Walking – even in the rain – helps to clear my head and get some fresh air/exercise
- Meet a friend for a swim
- I started the Couch to 5K running plan – need 30-40 mins three times a week but worth it
- Shutting the blinds, putting the music up and dancing like an idiot

### Mental:

- Play Angry Birds, Sudoku or other similar game which totally takes my mind off everything for ten minutes
- I get the cook books out and make a new recipe that requires concentration
- Keeping a pen & paper next to the bed so when I can't switch off, I write down what I am worried about
- Making a "to do" list of everything that I need to do and then crossing off in red pen
- Jigsaws
- I blog!
- I email myself with what I would really like to say!

### Emotional

- I go AWOL (just 30 minutes sat in the car or in a coffee shop with the phone switched off)
- A date with chocolate – booked in my diary
- Bath with candles, nice smellies, spa mat, ice cold can of coke, a toffee vodka, an eye mask, a good book or music
- Massage cushion
- Manicure/Pedicure
- Face Mask / Hair conditioning treatment
- Baking / Making bread from scratch
- I look in the mirror and repeat "I am not Super woman; she was a fictional character and didn't have children".
- Being able to laugh
- Meditation works for me
- Find a quiet spot in the house/garden
- I paint (by numbers)
- I email myself with what I would really like to say!



# Spring-Back Plan

<b>My Triggers:</b>  <i>What things tend to set you back?</i>	<b>My Go To People</b>  <i>Who are the people you know you can rely on?</i>
<b>My Strategies</b>	
<b>Social</b>  <i>What could you do to connect socially with people (even if just virtually)?</i>	<b>Physical</b>  <i>What activities could you do to help you become physically stronger?</i>
<b>Mental</b>  <i>What could you read/learn/do to ensure your brain is getting some activity?</i>	<b>Emotional</b>  <i>What makes you feel happy? How could you unwind and practice self care?</i>



# Spring-Back Plan

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