**Stress Management for Parents of Kids with ADHD**

Inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity are key features of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a life-long neurodevelopmental disorder most often diagnosed in childhood. In addition to experiencing difficulties in school, work, and social areas, one-third of kids with ADHD also meet the criteria for a diagnosable learning disorder. These challenges have widespread effects and often require complex interventions and support.

Very few people are more familiar with the widespread effects of ADHD than parents of children with this disorder. If this is you, then you know that while parenting is both a challenging and infinitely rewarding experience, it can also be very stressful! In fact, recent studies have found that parents of kids with ADHD experience higher levels of stress than parents of kids without ADHD. You are not alone and your experience of chronic/high stress is real and validated by scientific research.

So what can you do about this stress? Here are some stress management tips from the ADHD & Development Lab at the University of Ottawa, specifically geared towards parents of kids with ADHD:

1. **Take care of your own physical and mental health:** High levels of stress and being stressed out on a continuous basis can have a negative impact on your physical and mental health. Stress-related health issues include an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and a higher risk of developing mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Since you may be experiencing higher levels of stress, you may be more vulnerable to these outcomes. Taking steps to monitor your own health and addressing any concerns is important for increasing your own personal health and well-being, which will also have positive effects for your child.
2. **Seek support:** Research suggests that parents of kids with ADHD struggle with a lack of social supports. Coping with high levels of stress and dealing with your child’s ongoing behavioural difficulties can be a very overwhelming experience and the time and effort it takes may impact your relationships. Talking about what your experiencing and seeking support from people in your life may help you to manage your stress. Friends, family, professionals, and community resources can all be sources of support.
3. **Engage in relaxing activities:** Try to make time for relaxing and enjoyable activities on a regular basis. Doing so regularly may help you manage your stress and consequently have a positive impact on your relationship with your child.
4. **Recognize and validate your efforts:** As a parent of a child with ADHD, you may have been blamed or criticized for your child’s behaviour. It is important to recognize and validate all your efforts and the great things you have been doing and remember that ADHD is not caused by “bad parenting” and is not your fault. This is firmly backed up by scientific evidence and research. Additionally, having positive beliefs about yourself and your abilities may have a positive effect on your mental health, which may in turn reduce your stress.

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For further information or to participate in a study at the ADHD & Development Lab, directed by Dr. Maria Rogers at the University of Ottawa, please visit*:* <http://socialsciences.uottawa.ca/tdah-adhd/>