



Jaguars Toolkit

Navigating through Challenges

A child's perception of a stressful event is in less proportion related to the situation itself and in larger proportion related to the coping mechanisms he sees in action from caregivers, and he puts into practice himself to deal with changes and challenges. Remember the movie *Life is Beautiful*? Children are keen observers and learners of what adults display as real and valid... they believe what they see, what they hear, what they feel and what they imagine.

Through challenging times, parents and adults have the opportunity to teach their children new ways of navigating stressful and uncertain events by following together specific strategies; it all starts with us as adults and radiates to our children

The Toolkit

**THINK
POSITIVE**

**KEEP
CALM**

**PRACTICE
GRATITUDE**



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Think Positive

Spot your Strengths

Close your eyes. Go back in your mind to the last time you faced a problem or overwhelming obstacle which you ended up surpassing or resolving. Ask yourself *"What did I specifically DO in that moment to overcome it?"* Stay in that thought for a minute. Now ask yourself *"What was the most successful project I ever tackled and what made me successful?"* Stay in touch with the thought for a minute again. Open your eyes... You just visualized 2+ of your strengths, which you can now use to navigate through a current challenge. When coaching your teenagers or children on this, encourage them to make drawings of themselves climbing over the obstacle. They will remember it forever!

Write & Relive

Start a Journal. For the next 30 days write down one positive experience you have had over the past 24 hours. By writing it down your brain will automatically *relive* the moment; in turn you will feel more optimistic than before you started to write. Just know that the more primitive areas of our brain are constantly looking for threats because it was once adaptive for survival; in consequence our brain is *biased* towards the negative if we either do nothing or do not gear it towards the positive side. Brain is a muscle; practice optimism!

Laugh, Laugh, and Laugh

Sense of humor is not only a nice social skill, but sets up a mindset that correlates with a feeling of happiness. Laughter:

- ✓ Is contagious. It reinforces relationships
- ✓ Burns calories as it uses a good amount of energy from the body
- ✓ Releases endorphins in the brain, the so-called *feel-good-hormones*
- ✓ Is associated in medical studies to better cardiovascular health and respiratory health
- ✓ Has a positive effect on the immune system and is a useful and healthy way to overcome stress
- ✓ Serves as an emotional outlet, similar to crying but with no sadness ☺

...more than enough reasons for holding more positive conversations, watching more comedy shows, playing funnier family games, and asking kids to perform comedic sketches!

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RESOURCES: Journal of Positive Psychology; National Institute of Mental Health; Harvard Health Publishing; GoodThinkInc.com



Keep Calm



If “going with the flow” would be the alternative to speed your adaptation to uncontrollable events, so that you could bounce back more rapidly after them and develop the resiliency to handle difficulties more easily, would you choose to flow?

Wake up your Senses

Research suggests that people are happiest when their minds are focused on the present rather than thinking about other topics, places, or times. Try sensory stimulation; it is an easy and natural way to focus on the present while involving the mind and the body in activities:

SIGHT

Stare at nature. Invite your children to make pictures of it and post them

SMELL

Set up a contest at home around finding strong aromas from food (coffee, vanilla, pepper, cinnamon, lemon), or the garden (flowering shrubs, tree leaves)

TOUCH

You and your children may take your shoes off, and with your eyes closed describe texture and temperature of the grass, sand, carpet, wood, or tile beneath your feet

TASTE

Enjoy the rich kick of your coffee... Surprise your kids with ice cream at an unexpected time; they will love it!

HEARING

Play a song you haven’t listened in a long time... or tune into birds chirping... or enjoy down time in silence...

Relax, relax...

Breathe... deep and slow... Breathe in through your nose, allowing the air to move downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully. Then breathe out through your mouth. Notice the sensations of each inhalation and exhalation.



Just Breathe...



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Practice Gratitude

Pray and Meditate

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” James 1:17

Father, dear Father,

I am so grateful for everything that you have given me. Thank you so much for the loved ones in my life, for the many ways in which I am cared and supported. Thank you for the many ways I can serve and give to others. Thank you for the rich tapestry of colors in creation. For the beauty which is all around me, for the skies and the ever changing cloud formations. For the breathtaking sunsets and early morning mists. Thank you for your great goodness. My heart is so grateful and brimming with thanks. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you with everything I am... Amen. (www.lords-prayer-words.com)

Offer Social Praise

From your inbox or list of personal contacts, write one positive email complimenting, praising or thanking someone in your workplace or in your social support network each day; it will take you from 45 seconds to one and a half minutes to write it down and send it. For your children, ask them to write a Thank You letter to their teacher, neighbor, grandparent, godparent, or someone they want to write to. Have them mail the letter, hand it over, or read it directly to the person; they will not only learn to be grateful, but will initiate their own circle of gratitude around... ☺

Be Grateful

Count your blessings and encourage your children to count theirs; as individuals, as a family, as part of a community. For the following 30 days in a row, take your journal out and write down three large or small new things you are grateful for. An item might be a conversation, a lovely view, an event at work, a treasured possession, a beloved friend or significant other. If journaling doesn't suit you or your children, make the practice your own by speaking through it, or by drawing instead of writing down the items. Research has shown that gratitude correlates with optimism, and an optimistic mind performs significantly better at creativity, reasoning tasks, and overall job-related and school-related performance.