

# **STRESS** [HACKS]

**Supporting Positive Mental  
Health Throughout Early  
Childhood**

# INTRODUCTION

Experts agree that a child's future begins to take shape while they are in their mother's body before they are born, and throughout their early years, as this is a time of incredible brain growth and development, and learning, for the child. Parents and caregivers want to do everything they can to foster and maintain good mental health from the start. There are many ways to help children get off to a strong start, and getting good information will help along the way.

*Healthy Child Manitoba* has partnered with Stress Hacks to provide information on early childhood, with links to good sites and places to get more information. This booklet contains information for parents, helpers and educators on some common stages and challenges in young children from birth to 8 years of age.

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# ATTACHMENT

- Attachment is an emotional bond between a child and his/her parent or caregiver.
- Having a bond with your child will help him become more independent and grow up able to trust people in general, such as care providers and educators.
- Paying attention to your child's cues will help you form a bond of trust with him/her.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Starting Early, Starting Strong

– Ten things your baby wants you to know

Parent-child attachment

My Child and I – Attachment for life

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# BREASTFEEDING

- Caring for a new baby can be extremely overwhelming and exhausting. It is important for new mothers to have adequate help and support in order for them to be able to breastfeed. New mothers often have questions about:
  - Pumping breast milk
  - Storing breast milk
  - Introducing a bottle or a cup
- There are number of resources to support moms with breastfeeding.
  - The *Winnipeg Regional Health Authority* has breastfeeding clinics where Winnipeg mothers can access help with feeding. Many of the other health offices and hospitals have access to extra breastfeeding help.
  - La Leche League Canada is also a valuable resource. Phone help is available through the Manitoba La Leche League Help Line 204-257-3509. Calls will be returned by a Leader. La Leche League Leaders are accredited volunteers, and all are mothers who have breastfed.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

La Leche League Canada

Baby's Best Chance

Breastfeeding drop in and support

Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition

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# FORMULA FEEDING

- Although many experts see breast milk as the best nutritional choice for infants, formula is a healthy alternative for women who are unable to breastfeed. Infant formula provides infants with the nutrition they require to grow and thrive.
- Many families and caregivers choose to feed their baby infant formula for a number of reasons.
- Feeling comfortable and confident about this choice will help your baby feel comfortable as well.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Feeding baby infant formula](#)

[Formula feeding your baby – Getting started](#)

[Preparing and handling powdered infant formula](#)

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# EATING

- Meal times are important social times in your child's day. It is important for parents and caregivers to make mealtimes positive in order to help children develop a healthy attitude about food and about themselves.
- Children require a balanced diet with food from all four food groups - vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, and meat and alternatives. Check out [\*Canada's Food Guide\*](#) for more information.
- Children often go through phases during which they refuse to eat certain foods. Just like adults, children may have days when they don't feel like eating a whole lot. As long as your child is healthy and growing well, you don't need to worry too much about it. Forcing your child to eat can make meal time stressful and can cause your child to resist eating.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

When your child is a picky eater  
Healthy eating for children  
Child nutrition  
Feeding your baby in the first year

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# SLEEP

- Healthy sleep can aid in your child's physical, mental and emotional development.
- An adequate amount of good quality sleep is crucial for your child's health and well-being.
- Helping your child develop healthy sleep habits at a young age is very important as they are likely to carry these habits into their adulthood.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Healthy sleep for your baby and child](#)

[Sleeping behaviour](#)

[Safe sleep for babies](#)

[Safe sleep for your baby](#)

[Is your child safe? Sleep time](#)

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# TANTRUMS

- Tantrums are part of a young child's communication, as language is still developing.
- Coping with and resolving tantrums is an important part of parenting and helping your child grow and learn to communicate their wants and needs.
  - Tantrums are most common in children between the ages of two and four.
  - A tantrum can be as short as 20 seconds or go on for hours.
  - The best way to handle a tantrum is to try and prevent it from happening at all.
  - The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends against using any type of physical punishment to correct a child's behaviour.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Tantrums

Temper Tantrums

Aggression

Temper Tantrums

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# DISCIPLINE

- Providing your child with clear instructions, setting age appropriate expectations and making sure your child understands your expectations around his/her behaviour, being consistent and offering unconditional love are the basics of positive discipline.
- Discipline is a form of teaching your child.
- You can help your child learn self-control and responsibility by disciplining them appropriately.
- The *Canadian Paediatric Society* strongly discourages the use of any form of physical punishment including spanking.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Discipline](#)

[When your child misbehaves: Tips for positive discipline](#)

[Guiding your child with positive discipline](#)

[How can I effectively discipline my child?](#)

[Use assertive discipline](#)

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# TOILET TRAINING

- Many parents wonder about the right time to start toilet training their child.
- Not all children grow and develop at the same pace, therefore it would be better for parents to watch for signs of readiness in their child such as being able to understand and follow simple instructions, being able to let the parent or caregiver know when they feel the need to use the toilet, being physically able to sit on the potty and get off of it, showing an interest in toilet training and so on.
- You may want to put off the toilet training process during stressful times such as moving to a new house, birth of a sibling, illness etc.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Toilet training](#)

[Toilet teaching your child](#)

[When to start toilet training](#)

[Toilet training](#)

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# SCREEN TIME

- Children have a lot more options these days, technologically speaking, and therefore spend a lot more time watching television, or using their phones and tablets now than ever before.
- Studies have shown that a child's healthy development benefits from limited screen time. The *Canadian Paediatric society* discourages any screen time for children under 2 years of age. Less than 1-2 hours per day is the recommended screen time for older children.
- You can help your child manage screen time by talking to them about it, setting reasonable limits, providing them with healthy alternatives for entertainment and by being a good role model yourself.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Tips for limiting screen time at home](#)

[How to swap screen time for active play: The early years](#)

[How to swap screen time for active play: Kids age 5-12](#)

[Television – Special issues for young children](#)

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# PLAY

- Play is an important part of childhood and offers many benefits.
- Children learn through play and it aids in their healthy physical, mental, and social development.
- Many parents these days are busy with day to day life and do not find the time to engage in active play with their child. But play is crucial to a child's development and should not be ignored.
- There are many different types of play that parents and caregivers can engage their child in. Play does not need to be expensive, tedious or time consuming.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Child's play: Learning that comes naturally  
Supporting children to learn through play  
Play  
Physical activity for children and youth

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# FEARS AND PHOBIAS

Young children have vivid imaginations and can't always tell the difference between dreams or imagination and reality

- Many children experience fears and phobias at one time or another just as adults do.
- There are many different types of fears that children may face – from the fear of monsters to fear of spiders.
- Parents can help their child deal with his/her fears by being supportive of them, never forcing them to face their fears before they are ready, and by learning how to help their child deal with their fears appropriately.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Fears

Anxiety, fears and phobias

Taming the monsters: Helping children deal with their fears

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# CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

- It is not uncommon for children to experience some anxiety during their childhood.
- Anxiety may not feel good but it is a normal and necessary part of development as it prepares your child for adulthood.
- Don't be afraid to seek out help if you feel you are not able to help your child manage his/her anxiety or if you feel that your child's anxiety is affecting his/her day to day life.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Childhood Anxiety](#)

[Anxiety problem in children and adolescents](#)

[Anxiety disorders](#)

[Childhood anxiety: practical tips and resources](#)

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# FRIENDSHIPS

- Friendships are an important part of childhood.
- Making friends and maintaining friendships will have a positive impact on your child's self esteem and overall mental health.
- You can help your child navigate through the complicated process of making and keeping friends by being supportive, offering appropriate advice when necessary and sometimes, letting your child go through the process on their own.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

[Friends](#)

[Peer relations](#)

[Making friends](#)

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# SELF-REGULATION

- Helping children find ways to balance their positive and negative emotions is self-regulation.
- Parents and caregivers play an important role in helping their children develop the ability to self regulate.
- Consistency, routines, setting limits and positive relationships with caring adults are necessary for a child to be able to develop self regulation.

## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

How self-regulation difficulties affect children  
Developing self-regulation in kindergarten

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