
A GUIDE TO MANAGING PAIN

COPING WITH CHILDREN

Shortly after the birth of my young daughter, a friend joked with me, "*That was the easy bit. It's the next 21 years that are difficult!*" Parenting is certainly not an easy task. Parents always want to do the best they can for their children and often feel guilty if they don't manage to be the "perfect parent", [whatever that may be].

The task is even more difficult if a parent suffers chronic pain and is unable to do many of the things he/she would like to do. This is certainly my own experience having suffered pain for most of the lives of my daughter aged 8½ and son aged 4 years. My top ten tips for coping with young children while managing pain are:

1. Concentrate on the things you *are* able to do with your children, for example:

- Reading stories [short stories with the children sitting or lying beside you]
- Talking [how often do you do you get the chance to just *chat* with your kids?]
- Swimming [see who can float on their backs longest!]
- Watch TV *together* [a chance to vet the programmes they watch]

2. Try to explain to your children what your pain feels like, why you are unable to do something or have to do things a particular way. They need to understand why you may sometimes be short-tempered/tired/generally grumpy. It is important that they are aware you have a pain problem to contend with and do *not* think it is "their fault" you are like this sometimes.

3. Ask for help Don't be frightened to ask for help. Grandparents, family and friends are usually more than willing to help. You may wish to ask for help with household chores which would then free you to spend time/do a particular activity with the children.

4. Chores Ask the children to do some simple chores to help you. Just think how wonderfully independent they will be when they are older, [thanks to you].

5. Having other children round to play sometimes sounds like the last thing you need. However, my children play well with others and tend to *involve me less* when they have company - giving me space to do some relaxation/exercises. Also think of all the free time you'll have when the favour is returned and your children go to their friend's house to play.

6. Relaxation - I have discovered my little boy likes to listen to my relaxation tape on my Walkman. I not only find this extremely funny to watch, but also enjoy the few minutes peace and quiet it affords.

7. Exercise - Involve the children. Get them to join in, count repetitions or mark them off on the chart.

8. Massage I use the "quick massage" techniques I was taught at an Alexander Technique class on my daughter. She loves it and it has a very calming effect on her. She is also [at only 8½] surprisingly good at massaging me in return.

9. Stress-free! You may not get a lot of time to yourself. Don't spend the little time you do get catching up with chores, etc. Use the time to do some relaxation, go for a swim or, just do something you enjoy. Your children will appreciate the happier, stress-free Mum/Dad that is the result.

10. Love - Remember, your children will always love you no matter what you can and cannot do. To them you are "perfect".

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A Pain Concern Leaflet

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