



Parenting Stress

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Dear Susie, I am a stay-at-home mom with 20 month-old twins and an almost 5 year old. I am feeling stressed out all the time, and I don't know how to cope. I find myself yelling and sometimes just want to lash out. I feel so depressed some days. My husband works very long hours and I am burning out. Help please?

A: I can only imagine your frustration. Let me try to give you several solid suggestions and suggest you look through my Tips & Strategies page at www.relaxintuit.com for ideas that I think may be very helpful in lifting the cloud under which you find yourself right now right now, and allowing some rays of sunlight back in.

This is a rough patch to be sure, with your kids at the ages they are and your husband not as available as you wish due to his heavy work schedule. When we're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, it's not always easy to remember that this, too, shall pass. I've often said, *"It's difficult to remember that the glass is half-full when I feel like I'm under water."* I can appreciate how overwhelming it must feel trying so hard to be the mom you want to be and know your kids deserve, and keeping such little ones all safe is of paramount importance.

Please take a peek at this site: <http://www.embracingmotherhood.com>

They contacted me to ask if they could recommend my CD to their visitors, and when I saw the site, it looked like a potentially helpful resource for mothers where you can find ideas, and some other moms in similar situations. They seem to "get it," and one of the first things I noticed was their attention to depression and how common it is in moms. You don't have to do this alone.

While you may or may not be clinically depressed, much of what you describe sounds in some ways similar, and there is great help available in the form of affordable counseling, medical care, books, videos and parenting groups, etc. Again, browse my Tips and Ask Susie sections for more specifics on coping with anxiety and depression, and schedule a chat with your physician to get a professional assessment of where you are, and what kind of help will be most beneficial as you find your way through this early childhood stage.

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Q: Dear Susie, A thirty-four year-old mom of active triplets, I've been diagnosed with Clinical Depression. My head is constantly throbbing. My life seems like it's falling apart. What can I do to relieve the stress that is tearing me apart?

A: I can hear that you are in need of some real support on several levels. While I know it feels like your life is falling apart, sometimes stress provides a clear wake-up call that ultimately leads to a way to figuring out how to pull it back together, but better this time.

Today, those suffering from Clinical Depression can receive excellent care and support to see them through to the light again. Some people do not understand that Clinical Depression is a medical problem, not a "bad mood" or an "attitude" problem. When undiagnosed and untreated, some resort to self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, excess food or anorexia, etc. You are asking the right questions.

Depression can be addressed in a number of ways. First and without exception, I would recommend building a healthy ongoing relationship with a mental health professional you trust and genuinely like. There is real work to do in finding one's way back from depression, and the support of a great therapist can help us through the tough days, and to remember and rediscover who we can be. In some cases, an appropriate, licensed practitioner may advise anti-depressant medication or herbal remedies that may be useful for clinical depression, even for a short time, but this is not for everyone and is best determined by your health care providers on a case by case basis.

The throbbing headache you describe may possibly be from the stress of feeling unwell for so long. Schedule an overall physical exam to reassure yourself, and to address anything that needs attention.

You are rebuilding your engine. This is a time to take extra good care of yourself. Get up and dressed and outdoors each day. It helps. Millions have been where you are. Clinical or Reactive Depression, is a heavy weight to bear. But there really is a brighter day ahead.

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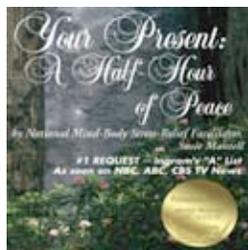
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12 QuickTips for Lifting Spirits

1. Limit alcohol, caffeine and sugar consumption. All can aggravate stress and depression.
2. You may find the throbbing eases with meditation or light exercise and slow, deep, mindful breathing exercises.
3. Try a mind-body visualization in which you actually imagine the "throbbing" slowing ... softening ... dissolving ... receding ... dissipating into the air in wisps of smoke.
4. Take a look at more of my Stress Tips & Strategies at www.relaxintuit.com for more stress-busters and mood lifters for the blues.
5. Let people love you.
6. Do something small each day for a stranger, This can have a surprising way of lifting one's spirits.
7. Write about your feelings in a journal.
8. Try my CD, "*Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace*," used in hospitals for depression and anxiety.
9. Once, when I was in the midst of a very difficult period, I made myself watch reruns of old sitcoms. Mash? Raymond? Seinfeld? Standup comedy? It helped. Give it a try.
10. Someone advised me at that difficult time, "*Don't give up an hour before the miracle!*" She was right. I remained "in the hole" for a while, but eventually one day I felt a little less miserable. Then, I was "not-great-but-not-awful." Eventually over time I really was myself again. No-- I was better than before. A lot better.
11. *Safety note to anyone who feel overwhelmed: If you ever feel at risk of hurting yourself, or anyone else, please call your physician or the emergency room at your local hospital immediately.*
12. Perhaps the worst is finally over. Now you know why you feel this way, and that there is real help available. One day, you will look back at this time as just a memory, as you move forward into new, as yet unwritten, chapters and adventures of your life!

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END OF THIS TIP##