

5 Tools Every Parent Should Have In Their Tool-belt

By: Mercedes Samudio, LCSW, Parent Coach

It's hard to be a parent, that much is true. And, it's even more difficult to parent when you're not equipped with the right strategies to work with your children. Schedules, long days, homework, games, practices, and don't forget eating and sleeping: all this is to be accomplished by you each day! But how? How do you manage to get through this without falling apart?

The answer is you get it together by arming yourself with the tools you need to make sure that you are able to care for yourself and your family on a daily basis. When you have what you need to get the job done, it doesn't feel as burdensome. Have you ever sat down to start a blog and the computer froze? Or, have you ever got in the car and turned the keys only to find out the car won't start? Or, even better, have you ever made it all the way home from the grocery store without the one main ingredient you need for tonight's dinner? All those examples speak to how not having the right tools can really impede getting something done.

The same goes for your parenting.

In parenting, when you are trudging along with a mediocre or outdated set of tools you can really stress yourself out. When you are using tools that don't fit with your family's culture or your family system, you can disrupt things and cause more tension. So, wouldn't it be better to just get the right tools for the job and stop hemming-and-hawing with the wrong ones? Of course it is! I'm glad you're with me on that!

With that being said, here are 5 strategies that you must have in your parenting tool-belt to reduce stress and tension in your family:

Empathy

Am I beating a dead horse here? Why yes I am! I'll level with you; I will always throw empathy in the mix of parenting strategies that you much have because it is the one skill that can always help decrease tension. I'm talking about self empathy and empathy for your family as well. To use this tool, try this:

- Think of another way to say something when you're not happy
- Walk away when you're upset
- Use feelings words to express how you're feeling
- Create a space for mistakes and missteps

Confidence

This is a little known skill that you will sometimes overlook. But, being confident in yourself and your decisions is helpful when you're trying to care for your family. And, I'm not talking about arrogance and knowing everything. I'm talking about giving yourself credit for all the awesome stuff you do daily,



and patting yourself on the back when you get through the day and accomplish goals. To use this tool, try this:

- Use positive affirmations to motivate yourself daily
- Give yourself credit for getting 1 thing checked off your to-do list
- Be grateful for where you are in your parenting and don't try to be someone else
- Look around, if everyone's still alive, then give yourself a pat on the back

Healthy Habits

Rule number one for parenting is to be healthy – physically, emotionally, mentally. This requires that self-care be built into your routine! No excuses. There are tons of ways to stay healthy such as exercising, dealing with intense issues with a therapist, taking breaks during the day, turning off electronics for a period of time, or taking a vacation. Another way great way to stay healthy is to be mindful about what you and your family eat! To use this tool, try this:

- Make better decisions about what you're eating
- Seek counseling for intense feelings that won't go away
- Spend time doing things that you love
- Take a break during the day in the form of a walk, nap, reading, or watching a tv show

Being Organized

Yes, being organized is a parenting tool. And it's one that will significantly reduce stress for you and your family. Taking the time to put things where they go helps decrease the tension when you are maxed out and something needs to be found. Being able to sort through your family's stuff and get it in its rightful place as a family helps with bonding and building relationships. To use this tool, try this:

- Designate bins/baskets in the house to store things
- Help keep things organized by getting rid of useless stuff every quarter (of the year)
- Use folders and file cabinets for a home office and/or for your children's school papers

Support

You. Have. To. Have. Support. You cannot do this on your own. It is not a sign of weakness that you need support. I highly recommend having friends, family, or groups that you can call on to talk about what's going on in your life. When you get around others (whether that be with parents or not) it's nice to know that you are not alone in your struggles or in your successes. Sitting alone at home trying to reinvent the wheel will only stress you out further. I can guarantee that you are not the only one in history to the problem that you are stressing over! To use this tool, try this:

- Go online and find local groups for parents
- Get into an interest group like crafting, yoga, or fitness crews
- Start a phone list of parents that you can call when you need to talk



The tools listed here are not foreign to you, I know. But in your hectic daily life, it can be difficult to remember that the 4 tools listed above can really help you on your parenting journey! I challenge you to add all 4 to your parenting tool-belt and see your stress decrease, your reserves increase, and your family be less tense. Go ahead and do it! And, don't be afraid to reach out if you need support adding these tools to your parenting tool-belt.

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