

# Taking Care of Yourself



## **Before you can care for others, you must care for yourself.**

When you are in a difficult situation with your child, ask yourself some questions:

- How am I feeling?
  - Do I notice a rapid heart rate?
  - Angry facial expressions?
  - Tense muscles?
  - Sadness or Despair?
- What is my reaction to the child?
  - Am I fed up?
  - Am I telling myself that my child is doing this on purpose to make me mad, trying to manipulate me, or seeking attention?
- How am I handling the situation?
  - Am I withdrawing?
  - Freezing up?
  - Digging in my heels for a fight?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions try one or all of the following techniques to help you care for yourself. You will also be modeling behavior you want your child to learn.

- **Use the Calm Down Steps.** Stop, Breathe, Count to Four, Give Yourself a Hug, Ask for Help. Ask your child to show you how!
- **Take a time out.** Make sure your child is safe then walk into another room. Ask someone else to step in for you.
- **Smile.** A big smile (even if it is fake) stretches and relaxes your face.
- **Stretch.** Touch your toes and then the sky. Clasp your hands and reach over your head and back. Press your palms together as hard as you can.
- **Repeat a favorite saying to yourself.** “This too shall pass” or “I can do it”.
- **Opposite Action.** Do something that is the opposite of what you feel like doing. Want to shout? Whisper instead. Want to spank your child? Instead, give her a big hug.
- **Take care of yourself every day.** Get plenty of rest. Drink lots of water. Exercise and eat nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Avoid alcohol, sweets, and fatty foods.
- **Remember that you are not alone.** Raising children is hard work and sometimes frustrating. Meet with other caregivers and family for support, fun, and adult conversation.