

December 2017 + Volume 14 + Issue 3

Thank You...

We celebrate you for all you've done,
For caring for your granddaughter and your grandson.
You took on this awesome task that no one else could do,
Because no one loves and cares for your grandchild quite like you.

You had the courage to start all over again
Raising your grandchildren at an age when
You thought you might retire, travel and rest
But the children needed caregivers, and they needed the best.

Some came to you in pampers and most in tears,
Needing nurturing and someone who cares.
Others came as toddlers, exploring the world on the run.
You couldn't believe this happened - after you thought that you were done.

Still others came at school age, when they needed guidance and direction.
Science may have you baffled but you are great at giving affection.
And some of you have teenagers, oh my, what can I say.
Just keep reminding yourself that they won't stay this way.

We know it has not been easy - often quite a heavy load.
And there have been many bumps along the road.
You've been misunderstood, labeled and denied the services you need.
Often criticized and not recognized for your labor or your good deed.

But we are here to honor you who have done so much
To change the lives of children with your special touch.
We thank you, grandparents: we thank you once, we thank you twice
And know you are appreciated for the rest of your life.



Strong Families

Stressful and Challenging Times Can Affect the Entire Family

Everyone experiences life's ups and downs. But, sometimes we get hit with challenges that really test our ability to handle life. Stress is the body's reaction to the changing demands of life. It is a part of life for everyone and moderate amounts of stress can be good! Stress motivates us to get things done. Stress is caused by a variety of factors. Daily hassles in life – such as getting a parking or speeding ticket, having a bad day at work, or staying up all night with a sick child

– all cause stress. Major life events can be stressful whether it's a happy event (such as graduations, weddings, or getting a new job) or a negative event (such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or a severe accident). They can all cause a significant amount of stress, especially when combined with the everyday stressors we may be experiencing.

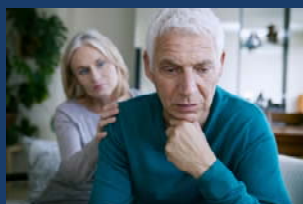
Children also experience stress. In young children, signs of stress may include whining or crying more often, having temper tantrums, regressing to earlier behaviors, and/or needing more attention from caring adults. Older children may experience symptoms such as a drop in grades, arguing more with siblings/parents, becoming angry more easily, or withdrawing from friends and family.

Stress affects the entire family. Think about the family as a mobile that hangs over an infant's crib. If we touch one part of the mobile, then the rest of it moves. The same thing occurs with stress. If one family member is experiencing stress, the others will be affected as well. We may think we are hiding our stress; however, other family members can sense it. Spouses may become short with one another or argue more due to stress. Being aware of how stress is affecting each family member individually and the family as a whole, is important.

How Your Body Tells You About Stress

While everyone may experience various signs of stress from time to time, if they continue to occur, think about what might be going on in your life. Symptoms may include:

- Feeling tired all the time
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Losing your temper
- Inability to concentrate
- Being forgetful
- Experiencing marital/relationship problems
- Laughing or crying for no reason
- Feeling anxious
- Experiencing frequent physical illnesses
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Withdrawal
- Tension headaches
- Muscle tension
- Sweaty palms
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Increased alcohol, tobacco, or drug use



Having an understanding of what happens in the process of stress may help you and your family manage stress in a more efficient and positive way. First, there is the event or situation, called a stressor, which can throw us off balance, as in the metaphor of the baby's mobile. When one part of the mobile starts moving, the rest moves too. Until we change to meet the demands of the new event or situation, we will feel stressed. Sometimes this is easy, such as reorganizing your day or week. Other times we can't adjust as easily. The events or situations come too rapidly, or we don't have the resources to deal with them appropriately. The stressors pile up and what we experience is an accumulation of stress. Take for example, a job loss. With this loss in income, the family may get behind on their mortgage payment. Both parents may now need to work outside the home, or one parent may need to pick up another job. Perhaps the children may not get to participate in some activities they typically do because of the extra cost.

Continued on next page.



Strong Families

Stressful and Challenging Times Can Affect the Entire Family

(cont.)

All of these stressors begin to pile up. Combine this with the daily stressors we all face, and the stress becomes more intense. Multiple stressors can cause us to act uncharacteristically and perhaps blow up over a seemingly small problem. The small problem isn't the issue. The problem is the cumulative effect of all of the stressors.

Much depends on your point of view about the situation. The second part of the stress process is our perception of the event or situation and how we believe we can get through it. Families and individuals handle stressful events differently. Some people seem to take things in stride and don't get upset when faced with challenges. Others become very tense and are unable to effectively deal with the problem. Some families pull together to face stressful situations, while members of other families distance themselves from one another. How we perceive a stressor impacts our success in overcoming it. Those who believe they can manage, eliminate, or modify the stressor usually handle stress better. Those who see the stressor as an opportunity for growth also handle stress much better.

The next part of the stress process is how we react and adapt. We rely on our existing resources to get through tough times. For example, if it is a financial crisis, we may draw upon a savings account. Family members may rely on their faith or spirituality to help them through the stressful time. Drawing upon our existing resources may eliminate or reduce stress. Some resources include:

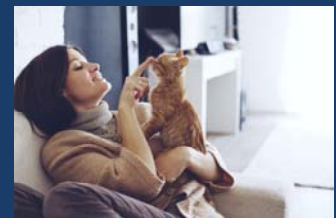
- Time
- Money
- Insurance
- Skills and hobbies, such as budgeting or carpentry
- Previous experience
- Education
- Family, friends, and community support

If our existing resources aren't enough, we may need to find new resources to help. For example, parents may need to take on additional jobs to make financial ends meet. Accepting help from the local food bank or energy assistance program may be a short-term resource. As a family works through a severe challenge, changes need to take place within the family. How well a family can adapt to change depends on the individuals and the family as a whole. We can actually become stronger as the result of dealing with significant challenges together.

Managing Individual Stress

The first place to start managing stress is with yourself. In order to assist others, you need to be healthy and able to handle situations in a positive manner. Some ideas include:

- Be realistic about your activities; make sure you have the time and energy for what you want to do
- Focus on one thing at a time
- Exercise
- Hobbies
- Laugh
- Visualize how you might handle a situation more effectively
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle and work on balancing work and family
- Journal
- Help Others
- Use moderation in the number activities you undertake
- Talk to friends and family or join a support group



-Adapted from "Family Stress and Coping". Download the entire MontGuide at <http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT201707HR.pdf>



Food & Nutrition

You're Never too Old to Play With Your Food!

This holiday season, while the kids are home from school and family and friends gather together, find ways to make healthy foods fun and festive. Get creative in the kitchen and find unique ways to make healthy foods the main attraction at your winter celebrations. Use cookie cutters to add a seasonal twist to your favorite foods! Follow the steps below to create a snowy scene using foods from all five food groups!

Ingredients Needed

- 2 slices whole-grain bread
- peanut butter
- 1 banana
- a handful of raisins
- 5-6 pretzel sticks
- 2 slices low-fat cheese
- your favorite green veggie (we used a bell pepper)
- ½ cup air-popped popcorn (or light-colored cereal)

Supplies Needed

- butter knife
- cutting board
- snowman cookie cutter
- small snowflake cookie cutter
- plate (solid color works best)



Directions

- Make a peanut butter and banana sandwich. Then, cut out a snowman from the center.
- Cut snowflakes from the cheese slices. (Tip: Don't have a snowflake cookie cutter? Use a plain circle and create snowballs instead!)
- Now let's create the scene! Move your snowman to the plate and give him a face, hat, buttons, and arms. If it's cold outside, he may need a scarf too.
- Add a background by covering the ground in "snow" and planting "trees."
- Let it snow! Add cheese snowflakes or snowballs to complete the scene on your plate.
- Have fun and make it your own. Try orange or yellow low-fat cheese to add stars or a sun to the sky. Plant extra trees, build a house, or make a snowman family!

-Find more food-related fun at <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>



Resources & Services

Spotlight Resource: THRIVE Parent Liaison Program

Thrive is a community-based organization in Bozeman established in 1986. Each year, Thrive serves over 7,000 parents, children and community members through its five signature programs. Thrive provides mentoring, education and support for children and families, so that everyone in the community has the tools they need to be successful. **Parent Liaisons** are professionals who work in the schools and



facilitate parenting classes, connect parents to community resources and support parent-teacher collaboration. There is now a Parent Liaison in **every** school in the Bozeman and Big Sky Public School Districts, and every elementary school in Sheridan WY's public school system!

Next time you experience some challenging behavior from your grandchildren, remember these tips from the THRIVE Parent Liaisons:

What if your child doesn't want to go to school?

Don't immediately assume there's a problem. Many children complain at the start of the school year because the teacher is making them work after a summer of leisure or because they've overheard negative comments about the teacher.

- Talk about school in a positive way. Your opinion will affect your child's own opinion.
- Get involved at school so that you can understand the culture and the daily schedule of your child.
- If there is a specific problem don't rush in to fix it without thinking it through and having a plan. Ask your child what they are going to do about it. Get them to problem solve.
- If you have worked with the child, met with the teacher, and the problem still exists, it may be time to reach out for more help. Only then would it be appropriate to move up the school hierarchy (parent liaison, school counselor, principal).

Power Struggles

"When my kid makes up her mind to do something, or *not* do something, a herd of wild beasts could not change her mind! The more I say, 'Yes you will,' the louder she says, 'No, I won't.'"

- When possible, avoid giving your child a direct command. Instead, offer choices. The beauty of this approach is that you control the options, so you're pleased with whichever choice she makes. For example, "Take a bath right now!" vs. "Would you like to take a bath before or after supper?"
- Allow your child to be part of the decision making process. For example, you might say, "What do you think is the best way to organize your room?" This increases self-esteem and gives them ownership over their own space.
- Avoid a power struggle before they begin. If bedtime is at 8:00 p.m., ask the kids at 7:45 if they want to go to bed now or in 15 minutes. Everyone wins!



You can find many more parenting resources on the MSU Extension Family & Human Development website:
<http://msuextension.org/family/>

And search for and download parenting MontGuides from the MSU Extension Store:
<https://store.msuextension.org/>

-Thanks to Lori Van Vleet, Parent Liaison, Chief Joseph Middle School, for these great parenting tips. <https://allthrive.org/>



Resources & Services

Spotlight Resource: The Family Tree Center’s Voices of Incarceration Project

Since 1985, the **Family Tree Center (FTC)** in Billings has been committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through supporting and strengthening families. In 2005, FTC began offering support services within the Montana Women’s Prison Parenting Program and, in 2011, the **Voices of Incarceration Project** was born from the collective experiences of incarcerated mothers, their children, caregivers, and members of the community. **The Voices of Incarceration Project offers support services, based on the voices of the four groups most impacted.**

Voices of the Parents

- Eight-session processing group focused on healing relationships
- Individual/family counseling
- Facilitative family mediation
- Parent mentoring
- Home visiting
- On-going support as needed
- Opportunities to give back through community mentoring



Voices of the Children

- Opportunities to share their stories
- Opportunities to help school staff better understand their needs
- Opportunities to heal and thrive through reparative experiences with their parents

Voices of the Caregivers

- Opportunities to share their stories
- Support communicating with parents during incarceration and afterward
- Advocacy, home visiting, community resources, and respite care

Voices of the Community

- Many opportunities available to incorporate voices from the community, including employers, school administrators and teachers, corrections case managers, and family advocates

All these services are client-driven and 100% voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about the **Voices of Incarceration Project** or any of **The Family Tree Center** services, contact:

Julie Christensen
 Nurturing Parenting Program Coordinator
 Author of *Voices of Incarceration Project*
 The Family Tree Center
 2520 5th Ave. South | Billings, MT 59101
juliec@familytreecenterbillings.org | (406) 252-9799, ext. 110

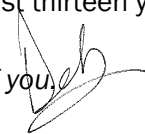
A Note From The Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

It has been my great pleasure to manage the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project for the last five years! On December 31st I will leave my position and embark on a new professional adventure; it is with a heavy heart I leave all the grandparents, kiddos, local contacts, and state partners I’ve grown to know, respect and love.

With this transition, some things about the GRG Project will change, with the most noticeable being that this will be the last issue of the newsletter for the foreseeable future; we hope to begin publishing again when additional resources become available. We hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter for the past thirteen years as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you!

My very best wishes go out to every one of you,

Deborah Albin



Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana—By County

Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Barbara Skoyen, RN
(406) 353-3157

MSU Extension
(406) 353-2656

Big Horn County—Hardin
Holly Jay
MSU Extension
(406) 665-9772

Cascade County—Great Falls
Katrin Finch
MSU Extension
(406) 454-6980

Tammy Phelps
Family Connections
(406) 761-6010

Beth Branam
Opportunities, Inc. Head Start
(406) 453-5415

Chouteau County—Ft. Benton
Janell Barber
MSU Extension
(406) 622-3036

Dawson County—Glendive
Family Life Institute
(406) 939-5591

Fergus County—Lewistown
Denise Seilstad
MSU Extension
(406) 535-3919

Flathead County—Kalispell
Kalie Andoretti
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
(406) 756-1414

Gallatin County—Bozeman
MSU Extension Family & Human Development
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Carrie Bear Chief-Evans
Eagle Shield Center
(406) 338-7257

Hill County—Havre
Jasmine Carbajal
MSU Extension
(406) 265-5481

Hill County—Rocky Boys Indian Reservation
Mary St. Pierre
Stone Child College & MSU Extension
(406) 395-4875

Lake County—Ronan & Flathead Indian Reservation
Nori Pearce
MSU Extension
(406) 676-4271

Lincoln County—Troy
Jennifer Higgins
WF Morrison Elementary
(406) 295-4321

Madison/Jefferson Counties—Whitehall
MSU Extension
(406) 287-3282

Missoula County—Missoula
Kelly Moore
MSU Extension
(406) 258-4206

Pondera County—Conrad
Wendy Wedum
MSU Extension
(406) 271-4052

Ravalli County—Hamilton & Bitterroot Valley
Jo Ann Wilson
(406) 926-1711

MSU Extension
(406) 375-6611

Richland County—Sidney
Carrie Krug
MSU Extension
(406) 433-1206

Roosevelt County—Culbertson
Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
(406) 787-5312

Roosevelt County—Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Carol Bemer
(406) 768-2430

Rosebud County—Forsyth
Jennifer Anderson
MSU Extension
(406) 346-7320

Rosebud County—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Kay Medicine Bull
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation
(406) 477-6654

Sanders County—Thompson Falls
Juli Thurston
MSU Extension
(406) 827-6934

Silver Bow County—Butte
Brenda Hergott
Butte 4-C's
(406) 723-4019
1-800-794-4061

Stillwater County—Columbus
Lisa Terry
MSU Extension
(406) 322-8035

Teton County—Choteau
Jane Wolery
MSU Extension
(406) 466-2491

Valley County—Glasgow
Roubie Younklin
MSU Extension
(406) 228-6239

Yellowstone County—Billings
Jackie Rumph
MSU Extension
(406) 256-2828



MSU Extension, Family & Human Development
316 Herrick Hall
PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit #69
Bozeman, MT
59715

Contact Us

316 Herrick Hall
PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540
grg@montana.edu
(406) 994-3395
www.montanagrandparents.org



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/
EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and
provider of educational outreach.

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

*"Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family.
Whatever you are, whoever you are,
you need one."
~Jane Howard*