

# 5 of the Most Stressful Things About Fatherhood and How to Deal With Them

In my first year of fatherhood, I was feeling the heat at work, a shrinking bank account, a messy house and constantly feeling like I had no idea what I was doing. Late one night, I was completely stressed out and went for a drive to get some alone time. I pulled up to a red light of an abandoned intersection and sat there quietly for a moment. All of the stress exploded out and I started yelling and screaming for a full minute. As I sat there breathing heavy after my tirade, I noticed something in my peripheral vision. So I turned my head slowly to my right to see four wide-eyed high school girls in the car next to me staring with their mouths open. I nodded casually, turned forward and drove off. Clearly, I didn't know how to deal with stress in parenting.

People may have told you parenthood is difficult, but you can never really know until it hits you in the face. However, knowing the things that push our buttons gives us a better chance of managing the stress and growing as a person. Here are some of the most stressful things about fatherhood, and more importantly, how to deal with stress as a dad.

## 1. Strained Marriage

Transitioning from husband and wife to dad and mom is a foundational shift. It takes a new rhythm, set of priorities and way of relating. Marriages become easily strained in feelings of neglect and conflicting parenting styles. If we have baggage from how we were raised or hidden distrust, this is when it tends to come out. As a newly married couple, it's easy to keep things like that buried or denied. When kids enter the picture, our patience with a spouse's faults wears

thin, causing both to be at odds. In marriage, you need to assume good intention, constantly communicate, listen and pursue understanding, and love and cherish your spouse. After becoming parents, this is even more important.

## **2. Shrinking Finances**

When I was single, my cousin, who had two teenagers at the time, told me that if I had kids I needed to be ready for the cost. Nothing stresses me out more than the financial burden of a family. Don't get me wrong, they are more than worth every penny spent and every feeling of anxiety. But the expenses seem never ending. The times where I am most stressed is when we don't have a prepared budget or an agreed-upon plan. Knowing what you are working towards is the best place to start.

## **3. Being in High Demand**

Never in our lives has so much been demanded of us. Our time, energy and resources are constantly given to family and work. It's exhausting and can be overwhelming. It's important to remember the big picture. When I ran a marathon, there were grueling hills that required all of my energy. Running those sections was tough but it grew my muscles, enabling me to run farther. This season of high demand will eventually come to an end or, at least, ease up. I believe, in the end, it will strengthen our character and, depending on how we manage it, will lead to a wonderful legacy for our children.

## **4. Having No Control**

Anything can happen when you have kids. Literally, anything. I do much better when I know what's coming and how I'm going to handle it. Kids are unpredictable. I can nurture, mold and discipline my kids, but I can't control their decisions or behavior. I catch myself living in fear of how I will be perceived by what my kids do. I live in fear of being confronted with situations as a parent where I have no idea

what to do or say. Our wise marriage counselor told us when we were expecting our first: “When your baby is born, start letting go.” I realize now that I need to let go of more than just my kids. I need to let go of my fears and the need to control.

## **5. Managing Sibling Fighting**

As much as I anticipate my kids fighting with one another, it still makes my stomach churn. When relationships are not right, I lack peace. Unfortunately, my first response comes from my boiling stress and I send them to room jail while roaring like a lion. My wife is much better at seizing the opportunity to teach them how to reconcile and love each other. My response brings a false sense of peace. My wife’s brings real peace. I’m still working on improving on this one.

What’s the most stressful thing about fatherhood for you?  
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