



# Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

## Strategies to help reduce stress for families of children with special needs

*Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!*

*Though you can't always control circumstances, you can control how you take care of yourself. The following examples can help you maintain balance and better deal with life's challenges in order to support your child.*

### ■ **Get enough sleep**

Sleep is very important for your physical and emotional well-being. If you really are not able to get enough sleep each night, "power naps" during the day can be beneficial.

### ■ **Maintain a healthy diet**

A poor diet actually can make you more vulnerable to stress. Maintaining a proper diet can help you better handle hectic schedules and stress.

### ■ **Pamper yourself**

Pampering yourself on a regular basis—whether it's a massage, a hot bath, or an hour of quiet with a book—helps you feel good about yourself and more ready to take on the world.

### ■ **Find hobbies**

A hobby can be any activity that you enjoy doing, from reading and gardening to drawing and cooking. Hobbies provide a nice distraction from stress and give you some much-needed "down time."



### ■ **Exercise regularly**

Exercise provides a stress release and keeps your body healthy. It helps your body release endorphins, which increase your feelings of well-being.

### ■ **Develop social supports**

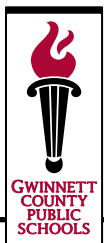
Spending time with friends can pick you up when you're sad, provide insight, and help you have fun. Expand your social circle so you will have someone to lean on when needed and your friends will have someone to help them as well. For the parent of a child with special needs, it is important to make friends outside of the special needs community, too.

### ■ **Nurture your soul**

Many people pursue a spiritual practice, such as prayer or meditation, which may contribute to emotional health and act as a stress reliever.

### ■ **Cultivate a positive outlook**

Cultivating a positive and optimistic attitude can help to decrease your stress level. It takes practice to change thought patterns that are not beneficial to your well-being, but the effort to "flip" your thinking pays dividends for you and for your family.



*Together, we will be there for our students—  
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!*

**Make the ordinary extraordinary!**

*Adapted from [www.about.com](http://www.about.com) by  
GCPS Special Education Parent Mentors  
Jackie McNair and Dawn Albanese*