



# Coping Skills for Parents With Disabled Children

Parenting is a challenge under any circumstances, but when a child is born with or diagnosed with special needs, parents have a much bigger job. They must manage the physical demands of their child's condition, understand the child's emotional needs and deal with their own feelings of frustration, loss, guilt and anger.

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## Become an Expert on Your Child's Condition

First and foremost, parents need to learn as much as they can about their child's needs and locate helpful resources.

- ✓ Find a parents' support group. Other parents can save you many hours of research. They'll also understand your emotional and financial problems better than anyone else.
- ✓ Talk to your pediatrician or seek help from specialists. A local college or university may have a specialist on staff or may be able to direct you elsewhere.
- ✓ Collect information from your library.
- ✓ Check with your county or state government for information on financial resources for special education.
- ✓ Ask for help from the public school district office, even if your child attends a private school or is not yet in school. Most school districts have psychologists, social workers and other specialized professionals on staff and are usually required to make their services available to all children who live in the district.



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## Build Support Among Family and Friends

Parents are often tempted to hide their child's problems from family or friends at a time when support could be most helpful.

- ✓ Be honest with your child's siblings and other family members.
- ✓ Insist on cooperation from your spouse in seeking solutions. A team effort is required to successfully meet the needs of a special child.
- ✓ Be frank when explaining the situation to your employer or coworkers. You may need to accompany your child to doctor appointments or attend meetings with specialists during working hours.
- ✓ Inquire into insurance benefits which might cover the costs of your child's care.

By thoroughly investigating resources and gathering information, you can help your child succeed despite challenging physical or mental conditions.