

## **10 Tips for Helping Stressed Out Spouse**

By Sheila Wray Gregoire - Thriving Marriages Blog - April 19, 20

Here are 10 practical ways you can help your spouse go through stress:

- 1. DON'T express displeasure when your spouse is upset.** Say something like, "you look like something's bothering you. Do you want to go for a walk and talk about it?" rather than "why are you always so down?" or "can't you just enjoy the family?"
- 2. DO allow them to process things with you.** When they start talking, say something like, "*tell me more about that*" or "*how did that make you feel*?"
- 3. DON'T try to fix the problem.** Just because there isn't an immediate solution or an obvious course of action doesn't mean that you shouldn't talk about it. Sometimes the point is the talking, not the fixing.
- 4. DON'T enable hopeless speech.** Ranting and venting are one thing, but what we think and say becomes what we believe and how we act. So, if your spouse starts saying things like, "I'll never be able to get through this," or "I just don't think I'll ever feel better," nip those in the bud and talk about it or have your spouse see a counselor.
- 5. DO express confidence that your spouse can handle this.** Say things like, "I know you'll make the right decision", or "I'm so impressed that you managed to keep your cool" or "I think you're handling this really well."
- 6. DO use empathetic language.** I don't mean you should baby your spouse, but do use soothing words like, "I'm so sorry you're going through this," or "Just remember that I love you so much." Those words can be like a balm on an open wound.
- 7. DO ask if you can pray or help.** Start the day by saying, "what's one specific thing I can pray for you today?" And ask your spouse, "If there's ever anything I can do to make it easier, even if it's just researching other jobs or anything for you, let me know. I want to help, but I don't want to do something that would make the situation even more awkward."
- 8. DO keep having sex.** Seriously! It's a great stress reliever. Sometimes guys who are stressed find their libidos shut down. But if your husband is still interested if you do the seducing, then do the seducing! It can be one of the best ways to help him feel close, strong, and powerful.
- 9. DO help your family home be a place of rest.** If your spouse is dealing with chronic stress at work, make an effort to have non-work time be a time of rest. Say no to planning too many busy weekends, keep the house as clean as you can (*one of my son-in-law's tricks, when his wife gets stressed, is to clean the bathroom!*), and get in a habit of getting out and doing things together, whether it's just walks in the park or playing soccer with the kids.
- 10. DO call out good days when they happen.** Very few people experience 100 bad days in a row. But when you're chronically stressed, it's hard to see the good days because the bad just seem so big and scary. So, when a good day happens, call it out. Mention, "*Hey, you seemed really happy today. It was so great to see that,*" or ask, "*What was so different about today that made it good? Let's try to do that more often.*" Learning to notice good days when they happen is an important step to getting over chronic stress.