

Lesson Number 7

*Remember to take good care of yourself
and have your own activities.*

Let's consider five teenagers and how they cope with their feelings and family situations.

Carmen

Carmen feels really confused about her mom's PTSD. She doesn't understand why her mom does the grocery shopping late at night and why she is anxious during Sunday church services. She also doesn't get why her mom won't let her have friends over to the house.

One Good Way to Cope: Gathering Information

When we feel puzzled, it can be reassuring to face the situation head on, approach it logically, and learn more about the topic. Gathering facts and getting "into our heads" can help us understand the situation and feel less afraid. Knowledge is powerful.

For example, Carmen finds it helpful to:

- Surf the Internet for information about PTSD and anxiety
- Ask her mom in a gentle way why being around large groups of people is so uncomfortable
- Read a book
- Talk to her dad about why her mom avoids crowds
- Ask her psychologist, doctor, or school counselor



Once Carmen understands that her mom's discomfort in large groups is related to having been mugged nine months ago, Carmen feels less confused and frustrated. She and her mom come up with a plan in which Carmen can

have just one or two friends over to the house instead of a large group.

Where could you get helpful information about PTSD?

Nathan

Nathan has had it with his family. He is stressed by all the chaos in his house and thinks about his family problems all the time. He hates how his dad, who has PTSD, yells a lot and gets mad over little things. Nathan needs a break!

One Good Way to Cope: Distracting Yourself and Having Fun

When we feel overwhelmed by life, it can be a great release to kick back and have fun. Sometimes it's healthy to forget about your family problems and enjoy yourself. Although it's not a good idea to avoid reality all the time, taking a break once in a while is very important.

When Nathan wants to escape the stress at home, he likes to:

- Listen to his iPod
- Play videogames
- Read a book
- Hang out with his friends
- Watch his favorite movie
- Surf the Internet



After doing these activities, Nathan can put his family problems into perspective and is better able to deal with them.

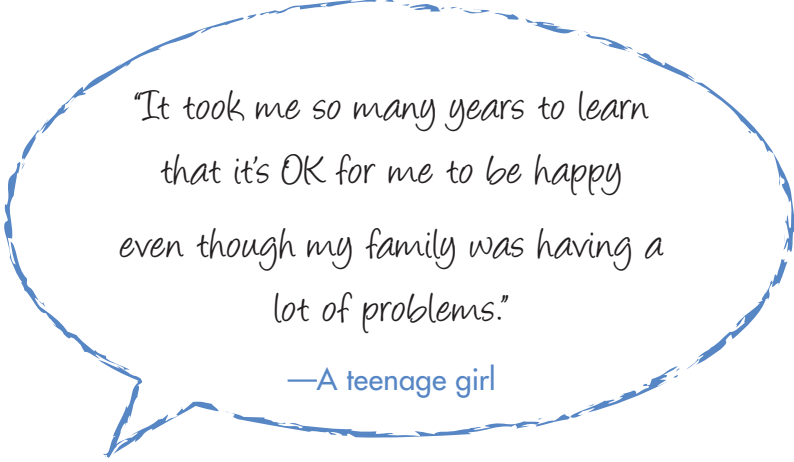
Did you know that preschool children laugh an average of 400 times per day?

QUESTION: Guess how many times per day (on average) that an adult laughs?

ANSWER: 15

What works best for you to distract yourself from your family's stress?

What makes you laugh and have fun?



*"It took me so many years to learn
that it's OK for me to be happy
even though my family was having a
lot of problems."*

—A teenage girl