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Survey Highlights Emotional Strain Facing Today's Parents

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A recent national survey has shed light on the growing emotional toll experienced by parents of young children in the United States. The findings reveal that, on average, parents report feeling like “bad parents” three times per week. Nearly half of respondents, 45 percent, said that raising children has proven more difficult than they expected, while 41 percent admitted to bottling up their frustrations, indicating a broader concern over parental mental health and the pressures of modern family life.

The survey, which aimed to understand the daily emotional experience of parenting, found that the constant demand to engage, entertain, and guide children has become a source of stress for many. These pressures are not only affecting individual parents but are also contributing to a more widespread sense of fatigue and isolation within families.

Darby Fox, a licensed family therapist featured in the discussion, emphasized that the current model of parenting often sets unrealistic expectations. She recommended simplifying daily routines, avoiding the trap of overscheduling, and including children in family decisions. Fox also underscored the value of fostering community among parents, noting that mutual support systems can ease burdens and build resilience.

This issue is not isolated. A July 22, 2025 article in *The New York Times* reported an increase in stress levels among parents across various demographics. Additionally, research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* highlighted a decline in maternal mental health between 2016 and 2023, reflecting a broader downward trend that predates recent global and domestic disruptions.

Experts point to several factors contributing to the intensifying challenges of child-rearing. Among them are economic strain, the rise of digital technology in children's lives, social media pressures, and reduced access to reliable childcare. The result is a cultural climate in which parents often feel compelled to meet perfectionist standards while receiving little institutional support.

Despite the difficulties, professionals maintain that manageable changes to routines and expectations can yield meaningful improvements. Encouraging open communication within families, prioritizing mental well-being, and maintaining perspective on parenting mistakes are central to reducing guilt and anxiety.

The survey underscores the need for continued public discussion about family well-being and the importance of practical, nonpartisan strategies to support those raising the next generation. While parenting has never been simple, the current environment presents distinct pressures that merit attention from both policymakers and communities.