

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF: PREVENTING PARENT BURNOUT

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/ID PROGRAM
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Parenting is hard work, and parenting a child with mental health issues is even more challenging. How can you keep going without becoming exhausted? Avoiding parent burnout requires real effort. It includes consistent self-care, establishing a strong support network for yourself and having a trustworthy therapeutic team for your child. One big piece of the puzzle is learning to tap into your love for your child. Here are some ideas on how to do that. (More can be found in the link to the article below).

1. Practice simple acts of kindness. When using words is difficult, you can often still get through with gestures. Taking a favorite treat to your teen can remind you both that you care, even if the offer is declined.

2. Smile when they walk in the room. And adding a cheerful, “Oh, I was just thinking of you” can shift both your hearts to a better place.

3. Grow your empathy. Patience and persistence blossom when we see similarities between our own emotions and those of our children. When you’re feeling overwhelmed, consider that this may be how your son or daughter feels all day, every day.

4. Touch base, literally. Sometimes we retreat from difficulty without realizing it. If your child craves contact and you’ve pulled back physically, add “Hug my child daily” to your to-do list.

5. Frame your frustration as a puzzle to be solved. Remind yourself that not knowing how to make things better doesn’t mean you’re inadequate. You simply haven't figured it out yet. Read up on your child’s diagnoses and let your child’s therapist know you need to learn better ways to handle what’s going on with your child.

6. Allow yourself to feel what you feel. You are not a bad parent for resenting how your child’s behaviors impact you; it’s possible to love your child and hate the effects of his illness at the same time. Find healthy ways to process what you feel.

7. Notice the bright spots. Write down one positive thing that happened every day. You’ll be surprised at how much better you feel when you take time to do this. Let your child know what you’ve observed.

8. Monitor your reactions to their behavior. Sometimes our children push our buttons, triggering old memories or reactions we thought we’d outgrown. Overreacting to a situation may mean we have to work through longstanding issues for our own sake as well as for the sake of our children.

9. Connect with others. Secrecy is a burden. Opening up about what you’re going through is likely to increase your energy. Confide in trusted friends or family members or find a support group for parents facing similar challenges to your own.

10. Don’t take your child’s behavior personally. Depressed, anxious and impulsive children can say and do hurtful things. Even though you are often the target, this is usually more about their pain than about you. Take some deep breaths and repeat silently to yourself, “My love is deeper than your pain”, and respond to your child as calmly as you can.

https://childmind.org/article/preventing-parent-burnout/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Prevening%20Parent%20Burnout&utm_campaign=Weekly-6-5-18