



Trauma
Care

Information

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Burn Out

Are you often exhausted as a parent? Do you regularly feel drained, overwhelmed and off-balance when it comes to raising your kids?



It's hard for every parent, but when your children have tough behavioral problems, like ADHD, frequent defiance or other chronic acting-out behaviors, the task of raising them to adulthood can sometimes feel like you're climbing a mountain without adequate supplies or the right equipment.

The fatigue that can come with mother or fatherhood (or for whom ever is doing the primary amount of parenting) is certainly not glamorous or boast-worthy, but it is a legitimate daily struggle for many of us. It should be said that there is a range of different types of exhaustion. The spectrum includes—but is not limited to—physical exhaustion, feeling burnt out, bored, frustrated, and a feeling of being defeated or fed-up. Of course, it is highly likely that a parent will have some blend of a few or even all of these.

Understanding what type of tiredness is plaguing you can in turn lead to picking the approach most likely to help you reconnect with the energy necessary to face the challenges of parenthood. Remember, you must secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others!

How did I get here?

Think back to the time of B.K. (before kids) and recall the images and dreams that came to mind when contemplating parenthood. Odds are, even if you were not wearing those dangerous rose-colored glasses, you likely did not anticipate the degree to which parenthood would stretch and test your abilities. How could you?



Parenthood is an endurance marathon that you cannot train for, and certain moments of the journey will be exhilarating while others will sap your energy. Juggling the demands of a family is an incredible feat that warrants respect and appreciation—though you may not see a whole lot of this from your kids until they are much older. In the meantime, finding ways to refuel and adjust one's perspective will help maintain sanity and effectiveness, while allowing us to tap in to the joy that children can bring. Whether you have recently found yourself bogged down or it is an accumulation that occurred over the years, here are a handful of tips that might perk you up.

Burnout is common in any job. Sometimes, you feel stressed out, anxious and overworked, and you begin to wonder whether the job is a good fit for you and your life. The job of parenting is not one you can resign from, however. You are responsible for your children until they become adults, no matter how needy they get or how underappreciated you may feel. Parenting burnout can cause major problems in your life, so make sure you identify and address it immediately. Manage parenting burnout by adjusting your expectations, balancing your kids' needs with your own and leaning on your support network for help.

Recognize the signs of parenting burnout.

Notice when you are feeling irritable or extra sensitive. This may manifest itself even outside of your children. You may have no patience at work or at school, and you might find yourself snapping at or testy with people.

Pay attention to any feelings of resentment. You might also feel guilt, anger, frustration and feelings of inadequacy. You could feel like you have no control over your life. Observe detachment from your children, or a lack of interest in the things you normally enjoy. Parents who are extremely stressed or burned out might pull away from their kids and not be as present with them.



Evaluate what you expect from yourself.

You might put too much pressure on yourself as a parent. Remember that most experts agree that consistent parenting is better than super parenting. You do not have to be perfect.

Take care of yourself first.

You cannot care for your kids if you are not taking care of yourself. Make sure you get enough rest, exercise and nutrition. Think about the "oxygen rule" on airplanes. Parents are instructed to put on their own oxygen masks before giving oxygen to their kids. This is because you cannot help your kids if you are not okay.

Slow down.

Manage parenting burnout by working on your pace throughout the day. Not everything needs to be urgent.

Stop comparing yourself to others.

Do not aspire to be like your neighbors or friends. You can't know for sure what is really going on in their lives.

Let people help you.

A good support network is a great tool to help you manage parenting burnout. Hire babysitters. Leave the kids with a reliable babysitter so you can have a few hours to yourself. Or, to save funds, do a babysitting swap with another mom so you both get some kid-free time. Talk to your spouse, friends and other parents. Talking about your stress and feelings of burnout will help you make sense of it. Sharing with other parents will help you feel less alone.

Consider therapy.

If your stress and burnout seems out of control, talk to a therapist or a counselor. They can help you get to the root of your problems, and give you additional tools to manage burnout.

Focus on the positive.

It can be difficult to think positively when you are emotionally drained, but it will help you keep things in perspective. Keep a journal. Take a few minutes every day to write about your feelings. It can help you release your negative energy, and give you a space to focus on and write about your positive thoughts.

Be a “Good Enough” Parent

While not a new story, the modern day mother is under so much pressure to “do it all.” As a culture, we tend to value the image of the parent who pours every ounce of themselves into providing perfect lives for their children. Being a “good enough” parent, who is consistently caring for your kids, is the key. You don't have to be a flawless Super Mom to raise your children well. In fact, attempting to always provide an extraordinary experience for your children at any cost can lead to burn out. So cut yourself some slack in order to stay the course! Achieving a relative balance between meeting the needs of your family as well as caring for yourself may result in expanded reserves for all.



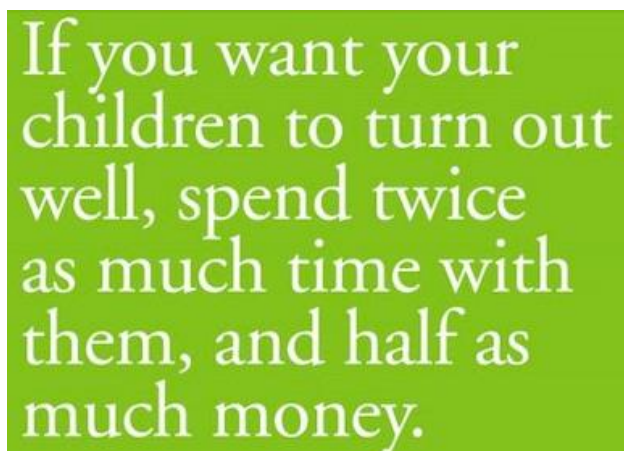
Expand Your Toolbox

We all have a unique set of parenting tools that we have acquired along the way. Some were learned from our parents, some from parenting resources, education or even media, while others may have been purely intuitive. If you are similar to most people, you likely have some skills that are more effective than others.

So, while we are just doing the best we can for our children, experimenting with new approaches to managing behavior may help you discover what will work best in your situation. There are resources online, parenting classes, and counselors who can help. These are designed to provide you with concrete tools that they can begin utilizing immediately.

At the same time, it is important to understand that change is a process—certain behaviors may change immediately, while others will require more time. It is frustrating and disempowering not to know how to handle the challenges that arise with raising kids and there is no shame in trying to better equip oneself. Making this step could be exactly what is needed to pick up momentum.

I think the following quote from Mother Teresa explains this aspect of parenting beautifully: “Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired.” My interpretation of her message is not that we should literally be able to love without experiencing some fatigue from the output of energy, but rather, that it is our personal responsibility to be as balanced as possible in order to consistently offer love. It is inevitable that parents will encounter stress during the process of raising their children, but it is up to each of us to care for ourselves so that we may best care our families.



If you want your
children to turn out
well, spend twice
as much time with
them, and half as
much money.

This newsletter has been issued by:

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Psychology * Play Therapy * Counselling

Please note that this information must not be used for diagnostic purposes. Please visit a medical professional for a correct diagnosis.