De-stressing Family Life

Regional PEAC Parent Event
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Mental Health Lead
Who we are and how we engage in the world are much stronger predictors of how our children will do than what we know about parenting. The question isn’t are you parenting in the right way? It is Are you the adult you want your child to grow up to be?

Brene Brown
A case of the....

Ya buts.........
If the day ever came when we were able to accept ourselves and our children exactly as we are and they are, then, I believe we would have come to an understanding of what "good parenting" means.

Fred Rogers
Chronic Stress

The impact on health...

– Individuals who have chronic stress and ongoing overactive body responses are at risk of becoming seriously ill.

– The first symptoms are relatively mild, like frequent headaches and increased susceptibility to colds or viruses.

– With more exposure to chronic stress, individuals may develop more serious health and mental health problems.
Why is this important?

• Long term impacts of chronic stress

• Brain adapts to protect itself

• We can model coping strategies and stress reduction for our kids

• Reduced parental stress = Reduced child stress
A bit about the brain

- Designed to keep our body in balance
- Our body craves homeostasis
- The brain supports *adaptive functioning*
- It is hardwired to protect us
The Brain—an organ that can become ill like any other...
Why is this important?

Flight,

Fight,

or

Freeze
A Helpful Brain Model for Families

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-lfP1FBFk
Changing Our Response
Responses to Stress: Mind-Body-Behaviour Relationship

- **Mind** (cognitive response): negative thoughts, attitudes and feelings
- **Body** (physiological response): physical symptoms and bodily reactions
- **Behaviour** (behavioural response): things you do to cope
Understanding the Triad

- **MIND**
  - Thoughts/Feelings
- **BRAIN/BODY**
  - Physiology
- **Behaviors**

The diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of thoughts/feelings, physiology, and behaviors in the triad.
Exercise

You are sitting in your room at night reading. You hear a noise/knocking at the window.....

Your first thought is.....
Exercise

What was your **thought**?  
i.e. animal, branch, person/burglar

What did you say to yourself?  
i.e. “no big deal” (branch)
   “oh no, I’ve got to get out of here” (burglar)

What **feeling** did your thoughts lead you to have?  
i.e. fear/dread (burglar)

How would that feeling influence your **behavior**?  
i.e. run/hide/shake/tremble
Understanding Our Needs

The foundation for finding the calm in the chaos
Connectedness and Belonging

The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

Brene Brown
Connectedness and Attachment

Dr. Gordon Neufeld

*Hold on to Your Kids*

Why kids need us more than their peers.
Competing attachment

What is happening?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIMkWJY5T_w
Increasing Connectedness

• One on One time (pick from the jar)

• Create structure, set your family up for success

• Tech Free Time

• Talk over problems in a relaxed way, not when your primal brain is driving the process

• Use scaling questions as a way to restore the calm
Family Mealtimes

1. Schedule them if you have to
2. No technology, including answering the phone
3. Structure the conversation, must be positive
4. Play soothing dinner music, have each family member create a playlist and rotate them
5. Devote one meal month to each family member (choice of meal, pick the positive conversation starter, and 1 affirmation)
What we *are* teaches the child more than what we say, so we must *be* what we want our children to become.

Joseph Chilton Pearce
It starts with YOU

Imagine a “you first” day.....

What would it look like?

What would you be doing?

Who would be with you?

Is there any part of that day you can bring in to your life intentionally, even if it is just one hour per week....
Take Care of You and You will take care of your family

- Make time for yourself
- Build a support network
- Practice stress reduction
- Get help if you feel your stress level is impacting you in ways you cannot manage
Examine Trigger Situations

Take time to think of when you are not feeling stressed out

*Is there a time when I feel relaxed, calm, at ease?*

*What is happening? What is not happening?*

*Who is in the room? Who is not in the room?*

See if you can begin to bring these two situations into closer alignment
Strategies: Take up Smoking

Just kidding!

Why this works:

- Taking a break physically from place/environment which generates stress
- Deep breathing
- 3 breath hug

Let’s practice...
Choose what you attend to

*In the end, just three things matter -*
*How well we have lived*
*How well we have loved*
*How well we have learned to let go*

Jack Kornfield
Neurons that fire together... Wire together

- Where you focus attention stimulates certain parts of the brain
- We are wiring our pathways
- Let’s learn how to control it
- CHOOSE to focus on the positive
Practice Letting Go

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSrSemQUeSI
Mindfulness

Strive to focus on the present
Mindfulness

*Paying attention to the present moment without judgment*

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWaK2mI_rZw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWaK2mI_rZw)

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbizmVKHdgS](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbizmVKHdgS)

- [http://www.mindfullifetoday.com/category_s/84.htm](http://www.mindfullifetoday.com/category_s/84.htm)
I realize I've only been at it for 5 minutes, but meditation isn't bringing me the peace of mind I was promised.
Self Compassion

The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.

Anna Quidlen

http://www.self-compassion.org/

• Treating yourself as you would a good friend
Applaud yourself

• Your job is HARD

• All parents are doing the best job they can with the skills they have

• Celebrate yourself