



Tamara Malinoff

A

PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO
PARENTAL
WELLNESS

Hi my name is Tamara, I am passionate about helping children and families thrive. I am a licenced psychoeducator and look forward to sharing strategies that will encourage a balanced life, for both you and your family. I have experience working with children of all ages and their parents in both the public and private sectors, as well as working in special education and crisis intervention.

Some of the pychoeducational services I offer include: psychological support, counselling, parent coaching, childhood behavior tools, developmental & behavioral assessment of children, screening and prevention of adjustment difficulties.

This guide was created to provide evidenced based strategies and tools to reduce stress, in order to embrace wellness and enjoy being the parent we desire to be.



Tamara Malinoff, Ps. Ed.

These are trying times for everyone, and parenting certainly has demonstrated its own set of challenges. A recent study shed light on an important topic which was previously considered taboo that we will address: **parental burnout**. We do not need to be in crisis to learn about it now, think of gaining insight and tools should you ever encounter it or know someone that you can share the information with.

Parenting is the most rewarding and also the most challenging job we will ever have. Deciding to become a parent is making the choice to give life, to transmit our values and principles. It is all about nurturing, observing, growing, watching, learning and evolving ourselves.

Also, to be a parent...is to have doubts, fears, questions, and fatigue (LOTS OF FATIGUE).

Raising little humans is wonderful but child rearing is a lot of hard work and it may take a long time before we see the fruit of our labor. It can also be very stressful on the daily and when parents lack the resources needed to handle parenting challenges, it can lead to increased stress.



What is parental burnout?

Parental burnout is not the same as parental stress. It is defined as intense exhaustion related to one's parental role, feeling overwhelmed, emotionally and physically exhausted, and doubtful of one's capacity to be an effective parent. As a result, many parents feel they are not good enough or capable parents and may experience a loss pleasure of being with their children.

If we compare the strains of parenting to the workplace, we gain greater insight on the demands of child care. During the first few years, even on the best days of cuddles and giggles, there are plenty of diapers to change, sleepless nights or 3 am feedings, tantrums, and so many other needs for parents to meet. The challenges are emotionally and physically demanding. This combination of roles and responsibilities is why burnout can occur.

Is Parental burnout depression?

Parental burnout is **not** depression since it only affects the family dimension, while depression affects all spheres of life (personal and professional).

Is it common?

Under normal circumstances when the world was not experiencing a pandemic, many parents endure some level of stress related to their roles and responsibilities when it comes to their children; concerns about behavioral or health issues, educational difficulties, or simply everyday tasks, can all lead parents to experience stress. For the majority of parents, parenting-related stress is only temporary and does not impact their lives significantly. According to a recent study, it is reported that 5% affecting 3.5 million parents in the United States, were experiencing parental burnout.

(Roskam et al., 2018)

To better understand the burnout concept, think of a depleted battery. When we use up all our quota of emotional and physical energy, there is nothing left to draw from so it is essential to have some tools to recharge.



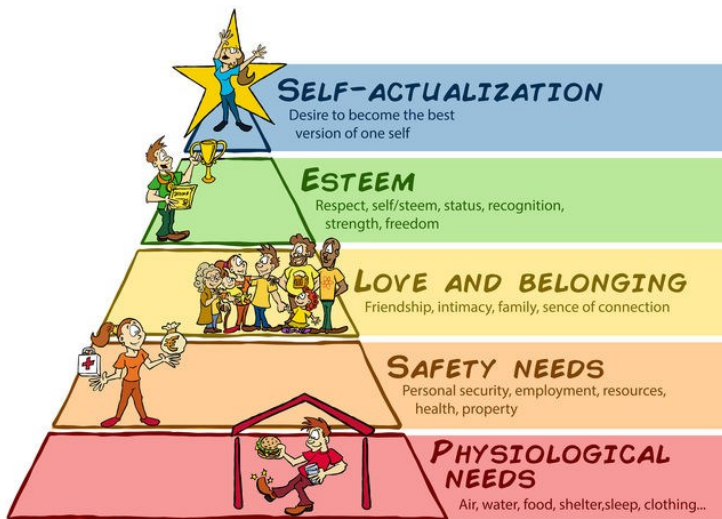
We cannot give what we do not have.

When we are stressed, it is so difficult to be kind and loving towards others. Our children depend on us which is why it is up to us, as parents, to take a step back and really look at what is happening when we feel like we are on the verge of a burnout and then take action **before** burnout reaches a critical level.

Meeting our own needs first

We all have basic needs that need to be met. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains that we are all motivated by levels of needs

which are to be fulfilled. His work helps us to understand how we are needing more than just the survival basics to thrive. Initially, children are fully dependent on adults for meeting their needs, which in turn, adds a lot of pressure.



As parents, we cannot afford to neglect our own basic needs for too long. Children have needs and so do parents. It is important to balance things out and remember that we will be a better parent, if we take care of our own needs and not overlook ourselves.

Taking care of our spiritual, physical, psychological, and social needs will help us feel our best so we can be our best.

This will also transcend across all our relationships and we can then become a better spouse, parent, friend, boss/employee, sibling etc.

You are important!

Psychological approach

Cognitive **B**ehavioral **T**herapy is a therapeutic approach used to help us become aware of the influence that our thoughts have on our emotions and behaviors. Without going too deeply into the technical aspects, **CBT** is a scientifically proven method that brings significant results! This trusted approach teaches that in order to change our emotions, whether due to anxiety, depression or otherwise, we must first change our faulty or negative thought patterns, beliefs or attitudes and replace them with concrete and true ones. While it is recommended to first see a trusted therapist to gain further insight, it is possible and even encouraged to practice **CBT** techniques on our own.



Practical strategies


To reduce the impact of stress which can lead to parental burnout, here are some practical strategies to modify our thoughts:

- **Adjusting our expectations:** when we stop striving for perfection for ourselves and our children, we will see a reduction in our stress. By giving ourselves permission to make mistakes, it can help reduce the pressure to perform. Despite what we may think or see in others, there are no perfect parents and no perfect children!
- **Trusting ourselves:** each parent is unique in their values and in the way they educate their children. We were not given an instruction manual to follow, but we can learn to be understanding, knowing we are all trying our best.
- **Letting go:** taking all the parental responsibility on ourselves is a heavy weight to bear. We can, although not always easy to do, admit that there are some things we can control and some things we simply cannot. Letting go is a process, but there is great freedom in releasing our burdens.
- **Choosing you:** it is essential to do things only for yourself. Think of it as a way to invest in your wellness and that of your children. Consider practicing saying no, it is alright to do so when the motive of the heart is in the right place and it is time to take care of your own needs.

Self-Care is child care

Have you ever wondered when we travel by plane why we are told to put our oxygen mask on first before placing it on our children? This analogy is a tool to better understand self-care. There is a lot of information to digest every day and the events spinning around us can increase our anxieties, fears and worries. Self-care will provide a much needed reprieve from the chaos and allow us to take better care of our loved ones.

Some self-care activities could be simply reading a book taking a bath, going for a walk, cleaning a closet or as a dear friend once told me to "make a soup", in other words, any activity that will change our thoughts. So, let's remember to put on our "oxygen" mask, take some deep breaths, and replenish ourselves by doing a little something each day.

The Importance
of Self Care:
If we put our
own mask on
first...and breathe;
we are then
better equipped
to help others 

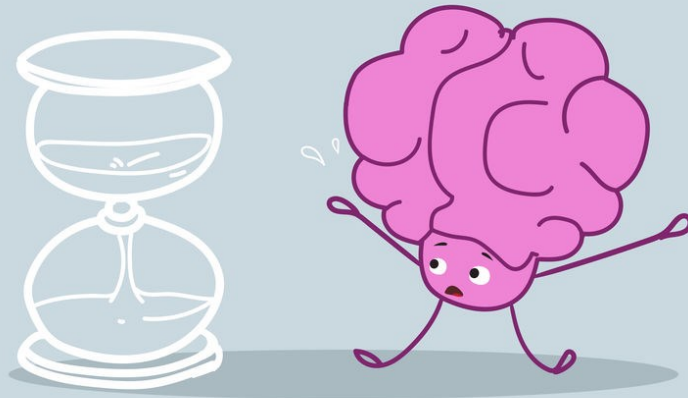


Try to
spend at
least 30
minutes
every day
doing
something
for
yourself.

Time management

Parenting involves new responsibilities that will change and evolve over time, according to the ages, stages and needs of our children.

It is important to review our priorities and make sensible decisions accordingly that are realistic and in proportion to the time we have. This way, we can be prepared to:



- Modify the activities we did before we became a parent. Time is no longer the same.
- Delegate some tasks. We should take advantage of the opportunity to choose where we want to invest our time.
- Accept that sometimes we don't have enough time. Also accept that things won't always be perfect, of course, that's the way life is but even though it is hard, it is good!
- Have realistic expectations of what we can and cannot do, depending on our children and each individual's specific needs and/or set of unique circumstances.

Wellness post- pandemic

While this guide does not specifically address the impact of COVID-19 related parental stress due to the unique circumstances which could affect each individual differently, there is no question we have been living in unprecedented times. The many sacrifices and adjustments parents have made by working from home, the losses of loved ones and employment, home-schooling children, sickness and the lack of support, connecting with friends and colleagues; seems unsurmountable. Having to adapt to so many changes while managing the fear of getting sick and worrying about people close to us who are particularly vulnerable, is challenging for all of us. This is why making **wellness** our top priority will see us through these trying times. The good news is that there are many things we can do to look after our own mental health and to help others who may need extra support and care.

If you, or someone you know are feeling anxious, depressed or overwhelmed, there is no shame in reaching out, to myself or any mental health professional in your area. Know that you are not alone and that there is always a solution to any situation.

Psychoeducation: At the heart of well-being and success.





For more information,
please visit my website at:

tamaramalinoff.com

t: 514.909.9454

e: tamara@tamaramalinoff.com

