

Parent and Carer wellbeing - Looking after yourself to support your child

Supporting a child or young person experiencing mental and emotional difficulties is common, however, it can be a lonely, emotional and stressful experience. We recognise parents and carers are key to supporting the mental health of their children, however, there is often a lack of support for the experiences of parents and carers. The difficulties and the impact on parent and carer wellbeing and how they cope will vary from person to person, however, practical advice and strategies can help parents and carers to look after themselves in order to better support the wellbeing of their child.

Although these signs and symptoms can be commonly experienced by parents and carers, if you are experiencing these more frequently it can be a sign that your wellbeing is being impacted

- Lacking energy or feeling tired all the time
- Feeling restless and agitated
- Feeling increasingly worried, anxious, stressed and overwhelmed
- Feeling low in mood
- Finding it difficult to control emotions
- Feeling tearful and wanting to cry all the time
- Sleep or eating problems
- Withdrawing from and not wanting to do or being able to do things you usually enjoy
- Struggling to focus and concentrate
- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things and daily tasks
- Experiencing burnout
- Being increasingly self-critical, guilty and worthless

Useful Resources

Websites:

- BBC Parental mental health and parent wellbeing: www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/parent-wellbeing
- Hampshire CAMHS: www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk

Books:

- *How to Cope When Your Child Can't* by Shafraan, Saunders and Welham (2022)
- The overcoming book series: www.overcoming.co.uk

Apps:

- Headspace
- What's up? - A Mental Health app

Top tips to support yourself to support your child

With your child:

- It's important to set clear boundaries
- Set aside problem free time together
- Problem solve difficulties together
- Set family goals and celebrate small successes

Notice:

- Stay calm and step away if needed
- Use mindfulness, pacing and breathing techniques
- Notice your own helpful and unhelpful ways of coping to stress
- Recognise your own triggers and stress levels

Look after yourself:

- Supporting your basic needs i.e. eating, sleeping, are fundamental to help you better support someone else
- Have a small break and space to reflect
- Develop your own coping and self-soothe box
- Find small moments for self-care

Connect with others:

- Connect with others who can relate
- Have problem-free time with others
- Keep your own interests and focus on the small pleasures
- Receive professional support for your own mental health if needed

Be self-compassionate:

- Notice critical thoughts and self-doubt, be more empathetic and kinder to yourself where possible
- Find acceptance in what cannot be changed and how you feel about it.
- Get knowledge as part of problem solving
- Focus on your own strengths and small wins
- It's ok to get things wrong, take a step back and repair conflict and difficulties with your child when things are calm.
- Allow yourself to be sad
- Set goals, focus on hope and the future



Scan this link to download the slides from this workshop.