



# LIKELIHOOD OF SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

Hakim Shooshtari; Child Psychiatrist

- The idea being that the **drain and demand** that can accompany being a mental health professional requires the professional **to consistently participate in self care activities** so that he or she can be operating at his or her best
- **deliberate and consistent exercise** of attuning to one's self in ways that provide nurturing, renewal, and a replenishment of energy.

# Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders

- Mothers of children with Autism experience chronic stress **comparable to combat soldiers** and struggle with:
- frequent fatigue,
- work interruptions, and
- spend significantly **more time care giving** than mothers of neurotypical children.

- Diminished health, physically drained
- energy burnout and
- strains in relationships are common in families affected by autism
- sleep deprived,
- emotionally exhausted,
- lost, scared and overwhelmed beyond belief.

SO

- You are in “Survival Mode”
- making “self-care” a priority.

# Shawn Michelle Gorsky 2014

- **the higher the level of education** completed by the parent the greater the likelihood that self-care strategies
- **age of the ASD child** was a factor in the level of physical self-care being incorporated among parents
- **Psychological self-care** was also found to affect other categories of self-care
- Both females and males listed **lack of time** as the greatest **obstacle** in implementing self-care
- improve other areas **of parent well-being**

# emotional self care



start a journal



watch a funny movie



express your feelings



create new experiences



learn to say no



accept compliments



smile more



cry it out



ask for help

@theself\_carekit

# Other often cited obstacles

- financial difficulties,
- lack of support from others,
- guilt,
- and **attending to other responsibilities** when not attending to their child with Autism.



you are in an elite group of parents.

- You are a caretaker,
- interpreter,
- dietitian,
- therapist
- and advocate.

- *Ask for help* and take child-free breaks.
- because of how specific their child's needs
- Remember that the *more often you engage* the help of a trusted individual, *the more they will get to know your child*. It will only get easier with time.



# The necessity of self-care

- Put **on your oxygen mask** first.
- stop and **do something life-giving for yourself**.
- You'll be **much better equipped** to take care of your child **afterwards**.



- Be **mindful** of what you do with your time.
- We all do it. Before we know it, we've **passed an hour mindlessly** surfing the internet or watching television.
- **thinking ahead** about **what truly feels good to you**. Maybe it's a walk, coffee with a friend or a good book



- self care strategies are **whatever works for you**
- Self-Care is not sign of being Selfish
- Reframe the way you look at **the time you need** and **the time you have** and make some effort to **purposely plan** and implement self care as if it were required





# To begin with,

- we need to **reframe the value** we put on self care,
- not be looked at as an **optional luxury**,
- instead as an essential component for **preventing stress, burnout**, and providing much **needed rejuvenation** to attend to the many demands that typically accompany parenting a child with Autism.
- It is just **as important as** that Occupational Therapy (O.T.) appointment on Wednesday night.

# Put Self-Care on The Agenda

- You live and breathe by **rigid schedules**
- The first step **to maintaining balance and self-care** is to schedule it on the schedule with as much priority as everything else on the schedule.
- The best part is that it only needs **to take up 10 to 15 minutes** of each day to be effective.
- whatever **feels best** in that moment













# Types of self-care

◦ feel more like fun than work

## Types of Self-Care

<b>Physical</b>  Sleep Stretching Walking Exercise Nutrition Yoga	<b>Emotional</b>  Stress Management Coping Skills Compassion Therapy Journaling	<b>Social</b>  Boundaries Support System Positive Social Media Communication Friends	<b>Spiritual</b>  Time Alone Meditation Prayer Nature Sacred Space
<b>Personal</b>  Hobbies Creativity Goals Identity Authenticity	<b>Space</b>  Safety Healthy Environment Stability Clean Space	<b>Financial</b>  Saving Budgeting Money Management Paying Bills Boundaries	<b>Work</b>  Time Management Work Boundaries Breaks

BlessingManifesting 17

# Lean on Others

- Choose friends **who understand what Autism demands** and
- are **willing** to provide support, but will also provide gentle reminders to get out and enjoy **a social life**.
- It is also important **to spend fun time** with Autistic children.
- **Outings with other families** with Autistic children are great because they have many of the **same needs** that families with neurotypical children do not think about.

# Writing a Journal

- Keeping a journal is an excellent way to say all the things that cannot be **said out loud** and **process them**
- Every parent has thoughts and feelings that they need to express, but **do not necessarily want to share with others**
- **rough, reading about how they worked out last** The next time things get time provides encouragement.

# Some popular self care ideas

- respite care (even if it is a short time such as 30 minutes),
- joining a support group,
- investing in a hobby (reading, journaling, gardening, taking walks, sports),
- exercising,
- sleeping, and eating at a healthy level,
- and trying some of those O.T. and relaxation techniques you have been learning to use with your child on yourself.

- Caring for children with Autism **makes parents strong**
- know **the struggles and challenges** of raising and living with children with Autism
- Parents are only as good to their children as **they are to themselves.**

TAKE CARE



OF YOURSELF