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Parental Burnout in the Face of
COVID-19

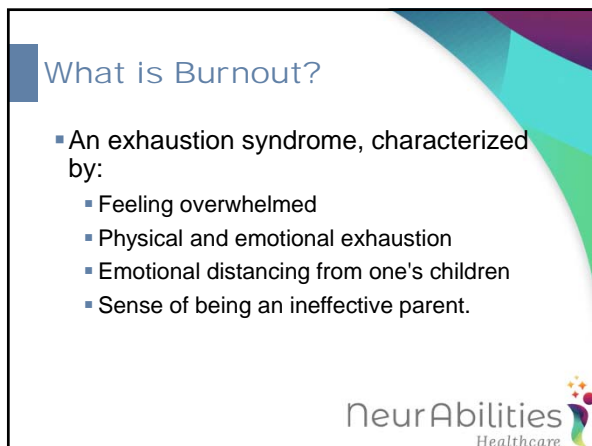
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Making a New Business
Card

- New Job Titles
 - Parent
 - Teacher
 - Support Person
 - Coach
 - Therapist
 - House cleaner
 - Chef
 - Entertainer
 - **AND YOUR ACTUAL, REAL JOB!**

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What is Burnout?

- An exhaustion syndrome, characterized by:
 - Feeling overwhelmed
 - Physical and emotional exhaustion
 - Emotional distancing from one's children
 - Sense of being an ineffective parent.

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What is **PARENTAL** Burnout?

- Feeling exhausted by the parental role; overwhelmed by basic parenting tasks
- Feeling there is some contrast with the parent you “were” and the parent you “are now”.
- Not being as fulfilled in your parenting role now as you were “then”
- Feeling very frustrated with the tasks of parenting
- Feeling disconnected from your children



What is **PARENTAL** Burnout?

- A focus on the **Past** (exhaustion) and the **Future** (fear and dread) crowding out the **Present** (connection, acceptance, and joy)
- Different than job burnout because it is very specific to the parenting context and parenting tasks.
- YES! You can have BOTH job and parenting burnout




Don't Believe the Hype!



Consequences Associated with Parental Burnout

- Mood changes – depression; increased anxiety
- Substance use/abuse
- Disrupted sleep
- Couples conflict
- Child neglect
- Increased risk of physical violence/domestic violence
- Risk of self-harm/suicidal ideation




Impact on the Family

- Without regulation, a child cannot connect in relationship with a parent figure


AND

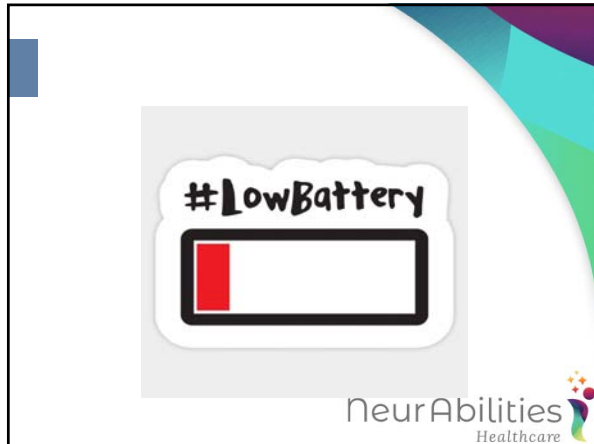
- Without regulation, a parent cannot provide a safe base for the child to connect in that relationship

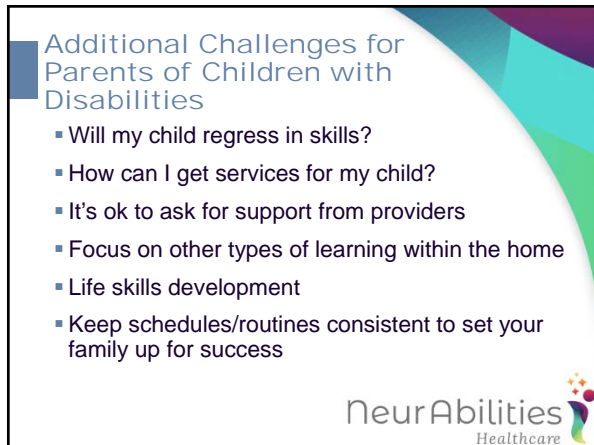


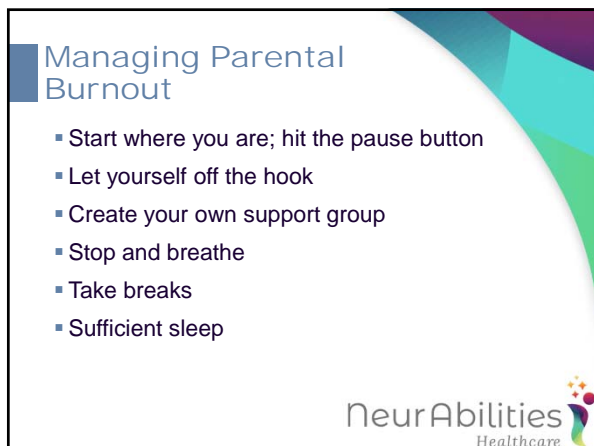
Physiological Effects of Stress

- In times of stress, one's thinking becomes confused and distorted
- Short-term memory becomes impaired
- Elevated blood pressure
- Headaches
- Impaired judgement
- Appetite changes
- Gastrointestinal changes









Managing Parental Burnout

- Mindfulness; hone in on your mood, thoughts, and emotions
- 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 technique
- Manage temper outbursts
- Stepping back from your thoughts
- Ask yourself: "What do I need right now in this moment?"
- **DON'T COMPARE** yourself to other parents/families

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Psychological Flexibility

- Choosing to do what's best for you
- Based on principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Looks at character traits and behaviors to help you in reducing avoidant coping styles

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Psychological Flexibility

The diagram illustrates the components of Psychological Flexibility. At the center is a circle labeled "Psychological flexibility". This circle is surrounded by a hexagon with lines connecting its vertices to the center. The vertices of the hexagon are labeled: "Acceptance" (top-left), "Values" (top-right), "Committed action" (bottom-right), "Self as context" (bottom), "Defusion" (bottom-left), and "Acceptance" (top-left). Above the hexagon, a bracket groups "Acceptance" and "Values" under the label "Contact with the present moment". Above that, another bracket groups "Contact with the present moment" and "Committed action" under the label "Commitment and behavior change processes". Below the hexagon, a bracket groups "Defusion" and "Self as context" under the label "Mindfulness and acceptance processes".

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How Children Have Suffered During COVID

- Empathize with them; "I see how you're feeling", "You look sad...what do you think is making you feel that way?"
- Model emotions and responses to frustration for them
 - "I feel like my work is piling up"
 - "I feel very frustrated"
 - "I wish I could take a nap right now"

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Becoming a Teacher Overnight

CORONA VIRUS QUARANTINE
HOMESCHOOLING DAY 1

AND JUST LIKE THAT...TEACHERS
WERE APPRECIATED AGAIN.

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How Can a Parent Get a Break?

- If/Then Statements
- Follow through
- Manage their sense of time; use of stopwatch/timers
- Structure parent downtime throughout the day

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Handling Child Fears

- Answer questions about health honestly and simply
- Talk about what they might be hearing in the media
- Recognize your child's feelings
- Keep in touch with loved ones
- Model how to manage feelings
- Tell your child when you're leaving the house
- Look forward with hope

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Routine and Structure

- Establish daily schedules
- Break up schoolwork when possible
- Allow older children more responsibility and more freedom as appropriate
- Exercise/activity
- Online social time
- Family time
- Bedtime

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Discipline and Positive Reinforcement

- Redirect bad/negative behavior
- Direct your attention toward positive behaviors
- Rewards/privileges to reinforce wanted behaviors
- Know when to ignore
- Use time-outs
- Special time-in

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“SO, I STEPPED AWAY FOR, LIKE, TWO SECONDS...”

THE BEGINNING OF EVERY PARENTING HORROR STORY, EVER.

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Resources

- Lifeline (in any county) – dialing 211 provides access to supports for food, housing, mental health, legal, family, utilities
- Crisis Text Line: CONNECT to 741741 provides access to chat with a live person during periods of crisis
- www.PsychologyToday.com – many therapists are conducting telehealth visits remotely
- All counties have a County Mental Health Center
- National Domestic Hotline has a confidential and free service in multiple languages (<https://www.thehotline.org/>; 1-800-799-7233).

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Resources

- Resources for Parents of Children with Autism
<https://www.autism.org/covid-19-resources/>
- Stress-reducing tips for parents of newborns
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Tips-for-Coping-with-a-New-Baby.aspx>
- Guidance for parents of a child with an intellectual disability:
<https://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/documents/COVID-19-guidance-for-individuals-and-families.pdf>



Questions