

Successful Parents/Happy Families

12 Strategies for Stressful Times!

{COVID Edition}

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AutismONTARIO

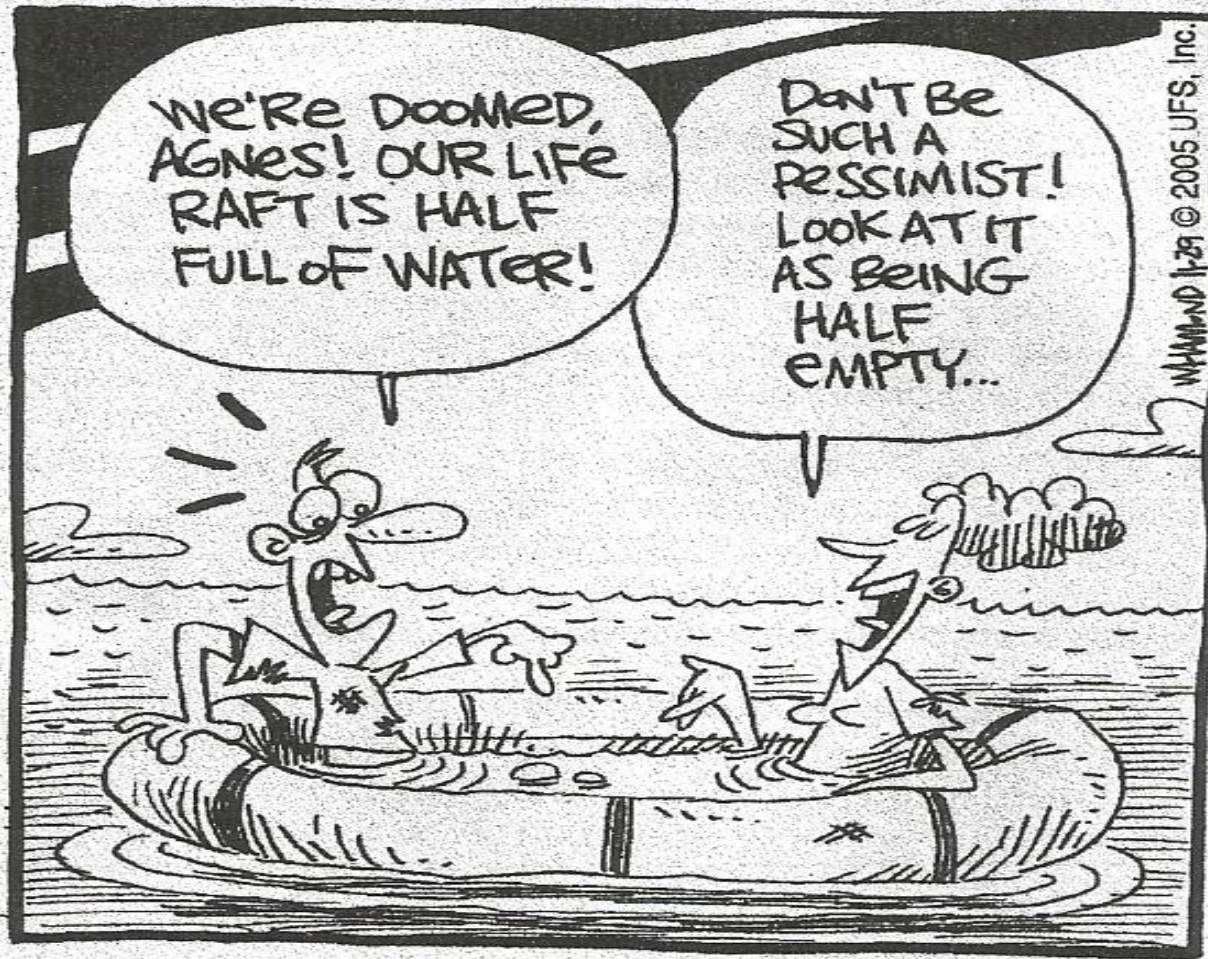
Causes of Distress?

- SOCIETY – perfectionism, pace of life
- WORK
- BIOLOGY – temperament, PANDEMIC!!!
- LIFE CRISES
- FAMILY TENSION
- POOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

- OUR THINKING!



REALITY CHECK — By Dave Whamond



WHAMOND 1-29 © 2005 UFS, Inc.

Parent Coping Styles

- Emotion-focused
- Problem-focused
- Accommodative



“Distress” Symptoms?

- Mental exhaustion
- Look, act & seem depressed
- Over-worry about past/future
- Couple/relationship problems
- Kids/adults show:
 - Behaviour/MH problems
 - Physical health concerns



What is Your Optimal Stress Level?*

ARE YOU:

–A Racehorse?

or

–A Turtle?

* We need some stress to be successful!



Parents' Life Stages

- Young → Frazzled!
- Teenagers → Frazzled & worried!
- 20s → Worried about future, but starting to roll with punches!
- 30+ → Happy, worried about future, & doing quite well!
- 40+ → Living in Florida



Parent Stress Levels Can Be as High as Soldiers Returning from Active Combat!

- Typical = 4% depressed
- ID = 8%
- ASD = 16%

Eliz Dykens, Vanderbilt U.
Marsha M. Seltzer, U. Wisconsin-Madison



1. Parenting Skill

Parents need to work
as a team!

[Establishes a foundation for the family!]



1. Parenting Skill

- Attend meetings together
- Advocate together/Take notes
- Help with child care, taxi driving kids, household responsibilities, listening ear
- Implementing behavioural strategies



2. Parenting Skill

When Under Enormous Stress...

**Make really healthy
decisions about...**

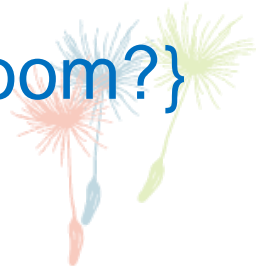


2. Parenting Skill

- Food & caffeine
- Alcohol or drugs
- Tobacco
- Workaholism
- Borrowing/Spending
- Gambling
- Friendships
- Risky driving

Stress Management

- Diet/Nutrition
- Sleep
- Exercise {Fitbit}
- Fun
- Mindful living
- Establish routines
- Socialize {Zoom?}



3. Parenting Skill

Create Sensory Favourable Environments

Elspeth Bradley & Phoebe Caldwell (2013)



Inside-Out Approach

- Turn down bright lights/Wear sun glasses
- Use ear plugs, white noise, music, headphones
- Allow some rocking & self-stim
- Understand sensitivities to medication
- Offer food/comfort drinks (e.g., herbal tea)
- Speak quieter, more slowly, more succinctly, more calmly, & maintain positive attitude
- Manage aromas & use soothing paint colours
- Weighted blankets
- Minimize unwanted visitors
- Comfortable, supportive furniture
- Hand-shakes on their terms
- Designate private locations to re-charge!



4. Parenting Skill

Don't Let Your Thoughts Play Tricks on You!

- YOU'RE PROBABLY HEALTHIER THAN YOU THINK!
- Jealousy is normal, but...
- Don't compare your insides others outsides!
- Every family struggles
...every day!



Distorted, Negative Thinking*

Don't Let Thoughts Play Tricks on You!

- Black or white thinking*
- Discounting the positive
- Jumping to conclusions
- Catastrophizing*
- Should statements*
- Labelling*
- Blaming self for things you didn't do*
- Feeling like an imposter*
- Spotlight effect*



anxiety & depression



Parents Today...

Best in history!



**Allow Yourself Three “dumb
decisions” per year!**

That do not involve violence!



5. Parenting Skill

Become Sex-perts!

Common counselling topic



Rainbow [obsolete w/o acceptance]

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Straight
- Bisexual
- Etc.
- Nonbinary
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Asexual

“Who am I to judge?”



Dating (websites?),
Living Together,
marriage
&
“sexual insurance”



6. Parenting Skill

Manage your expectations!

Pace Yourself: “This is a marathon, not a sprint!”



High Expectations lead to Burnout

- Be a “**GOOD ENOUGH PARENT**” [not perfect]!
- Accept what you cannot change!
 - Focus on what you can change!
- Recognize “very complex situations”!
- Avoid shaming! **Expectations can traumatize!**
- Try part-time employment by age 16.
- Focus: Next 3 months!
- 25!!!



Mattering

Realistic expectations/lead to lives that “**matter**”:

- Important to someone.
- Valued roles/Others rely on them.
- Noticed if they are absent.
- Actions are valued/Skills appreciated
- Feel unique, noticed, special.
- They “shine”!**

(Gordon Flett, 2018)



7. Parenting Skill

**Turn to Great
Escapes!**



7. Parenting Skill

- Reading
- History
- Games
- Hobbies/passions
(carpentry, crafts)
- Hot bubble bath
- Pets
- Physical exercise
- Sports: special teams
- Part-time job
- A cause
- Sports
- Outdoors (gardening, hiking, camping)
- Spiritual life
- Meditation/prayer
- Writing
- Humour/comedy
- Volunteer
- Take little risks



8a. Parenting Skill - Single Parents

**Strengthen
your
support network!**

{Tell COVID: “Go to Heck!”}



8a. Parenting Skill - Single Parents

- Tap into family, friend, respite support, pay sibs
- Do favours for others.
- Cheap nights out/Try dating again?
- Weekends away w/o Kids
- Vacations w/o kids
- Join Autism Ontario, faith community, online or community groups.



8b. Parenting Skill - Couples

**Re-marry/
Re-connect with your
Partner!**



Making love

- Kind words
- Holding hands
- Hugs & Cuddles (e.g., if exhausted)
- Random Acts of Kindness/Service
- Being playful, joking, fun
- The “Big Kahuna”
- Sexual insurance

Five Love Languages

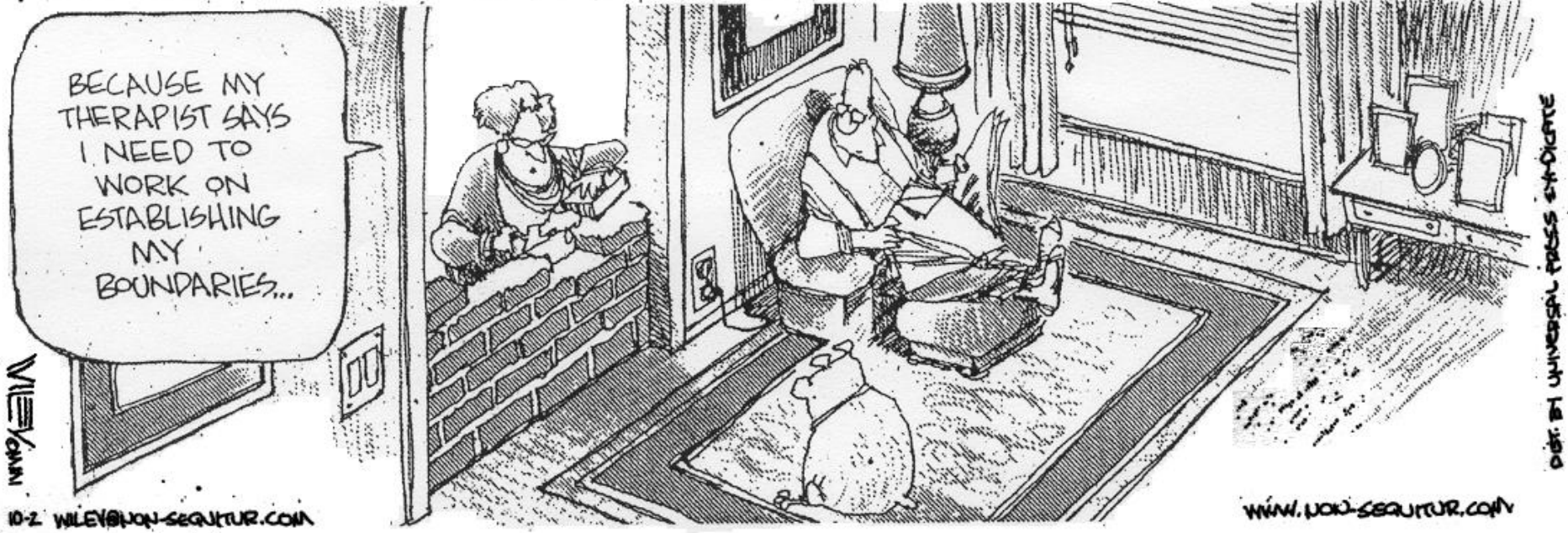


9. Parenting Skill

**Set Healthy
Boundaries!**



NON SEQUITUR – By Wiley e-mail: sequitoon@aol.com



Tighten Boundaries

- Avoid or time limit visits with negative or unsupportive relatives (e.g., Christmas).
- Kids not allowed to sleep with parents.
- Protect confidential information.
- Parents go out/Vacation w/o the kids.
- Set limits on volunteering (e.g., boards).
- Turn off the news (esp with COVID)!
- **Rule: One hour on/One hour off technology!**
 - Pandemic allows for more screen time!
- Saying “No!” to kids’ unrealistic demands
(money, purchases, dangerous activities, extra food)



Loosen Boundaries

- **Go on outings w/o partner.**
- **Parent returning to work/school.**
- **Join fitness program.**
- **Spending special time with siblings.**
- **Use respite.**
- **Hire nanny or care-giver.**
- **Join online support group**



10. Parenting Skill

Ignite your spirit!

Faith group

Prayer & Meditation

Find a place of solitude to recharge

{COVID quiet times can be used to strengthen spiritual self}



Surround Yourself with : Positive, Fun, Safe People!*

- Family
- Friends
- Professionals

*A cheering section!



Breathe Away Your Tension

[Relaxation Response]

- Breathe in through your nose... and hold it.
- Blow out through your mouth...and (silently) say “one”.
- Repeat....
- Allow air into your abdomen.



11. Parenting Skill

Watch For Little Miracles to Happen!

- **Myth:** Don't happen anymore!
- **Happen everyday...** Often different than you expect!



Little Miracles I See...

- Finally find professional, friend or support group, drug, etc...
- Meet amazing people (A.O.) you never would have met!
- Find a new cause/your real purpose...
- See your family pull together
- Develop new skills, or found new career opportunities.
- Couples grow stronger, after being divided...
- Spiritual life is ignited...(e.g., cope better, “face of God”, eternal life...)
- Hardened people become more compassionate
- Grief & frustration turns to fortitude & pride!
- **More authentic view of success!**



The Miracle / Joy of Parenthood

**Is helping your children
overcome obstacles &
hurdles – or accomplishing
things, you weren't sure
they could do...**

AND THEY DO IT!



12. Parenting Skill

Go for individual, couple
or Family therapy?

[Virtual/Video]



ANGER!!!

Munro

One Minute Rule!

30 points

60 points



Speak...

- More quietly
- More slowly
- More calmly
- More succinctly
- Remain positive

Hug with eyes, your voice, your listening... & your positive attitude!



Family Gatherings

Request that...various family
take turns spending minimum of
5 minutes talking to individual
about “special interest”!

“I need a break!”



Don't go it alone!

Learn how to Advocate without Exhausting Yourself!

{The system helps the families
who know the system!}



What makes a Good Parent?

Scientific American Mind Nov/Dec 2010
Research review over 50 years



Parenting Skills

- Love, physical affection, acceptance & quality time
- Good stress management, mindfulness, diet & positive thinking
- Healthy relationship with partner or co-parent
- Encourages self-sufficiently
- Positive behavioural approaches



1. Self 2. Partner 3. Children 4. Others



In Conclusion

- COVID will end!!!
- Unsung heroes!
- There is greatness....!
- Courage!!!

- Can make professionals... love their work!



Learn to hug with...

- Your eyes
- Your voice
- Your listening

- Your positive frame of mind!



Contact

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