

Nourishing the Caregiver: The Importance of Self-Care

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Keys to Remember When Raising Youth with an FASD

- ▶ Always ask what is causing a behavior before responding to it
 - The cause tells us how we need to respond
- ▶ Think about what age the behavior that you are seeing feels like
 - Instead of getting angry at the behavior, we can then understand it and respond differently
- ▶ Recognize issues of loss and grieving



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Why Think About Loss and Grieving

- ▶ We often only think about loss and grief in terms of death
- ▶ All individuals with an FASD have experienced multiple losses
 - They are not like their peers as they get older
- ▶ All families experience multiple losses
- ▶ Sometimes, behaviors that we see are reflections of issues around loss
 - If we don't recognize that, we may not respond in a helpful way



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If we do not in some way mourn our losses, we end up living in the past, regretting the present, and fearing the future.

• Elizabeth Kübler-Ross



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Physical Manifestations of Grief

Adapted From Pickett (1993)

- ▶ Hollowness in the stomach
- ▶ Tightness in the chest and throat
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Oversensitivity to noise
- ▶ Muscle weakness
- ▶ Lack of energy
- ▶ Dry mouth
- ▶ Hallucinations
- ▶ Mask-like face



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Behaviors Associated With Grief

Adapted From Pickett (1993)

- ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Appetite disturbances
- ▶ Absent-minded behavior
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Distressing dreams
- ▶ Sighing
- ▶ Restlessness
- ▶ Crying
- ▶ Anger outbursts
- ▶ Mood swings



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Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Hopes and dreams
- ▶ Self-esteem and competence
- ▶ Balanced family system
- ▶ Peer relationships
- ▶ Intimate relationships
- ▶ Support from others



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Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Their family (through separations)
- ▶ Consistent caregivers
- ▶ Vocational/educational opportunities
- ▶ A role in the family and in society
- ▶ Joy and pleasure



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Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Potential/talents
- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ The ability to be like everyone else
- ▶ Freedom
- ▶ Security about the future
- ▶ Control



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Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Hopes and dreams
- ▶ Self-esteem and competence
- ▶ Balanced family system
- ▶ Support from family, friends, community



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Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ Their loved one (placement, suicide, leaving the family)
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Financial security
- ▶ Privacy



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Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Freedom
- ▶ Social network
- ▶ The ability to “kvell”
- ▶ Security about the future
- ▶ Control



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Blame Checklist

Dubovsky (1998)

- ▶ Check off all those whom you can blame for the problems you encounter:
 - Yourself -----
 - Your significant other -----
 - Genetics -----
 - “The system” -----
 - Social media -----
 - Aliens -----
 - The line-up of the planets -----
 - A superior being -----



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Keys to Remember When Raising Youth with an FASD

- ▶ Identify positives in those for whom you are caring
- ▶ Tell them at least 5 times a day what they are doing right
- ▶ Identify their strengths, abilities, and what they enjoy
 - Write them down
- ▶ Identify who the people are who support you



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Keys to Remember When Raising Youth with an FASD

- ▶ Try to be fair rather than treat everyone the same
- ▶ When things go poorly, remember what has gone right
- ▶ Find something to smile about every day
- ▶ Arrange to do something fun with them every day
 - Even if it is just for a few minutes



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Strengths of Persons With an FASD

- ▶ Friendly
- ▶ Likeable
- ▶ Verbal
- ▶ Helpful
- ▶ Caring
- ▶ Hard worker
- ▶ Creative
- ▶ Determined
- ▶ Have points of insight
- ▶ Good with younger children*
- ▶ Not malicious
- ▶ Every day is a new day



D. Dubovsky, Drexel University College of Medicine (1999)

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Person First Language

- ▶ “My child has bipolar disorder” not “he’s bipolar”
- ▶ “She has an oppositional disorder” rather than “She’s oppositional”
- ▶ “The youth in foster care” not “the foster child”
- ▶ “A woman with a substance use disorder” rather than “a substance abusing woman”
- ▶ “A child with autism” not “the autistic child”
- ▶ “He has FASD” not “he is FASD”



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Taking Care of Yourself

- ▶ Acknowledge frustrations
- ▶ Learn to walk the fine line between assertiveness and aggressiveness
- ▶ Find an advocate to support you at meetings
- ▶ Identify someone you can vent to
 - We all need to be able to vent our frustrations to someone who will listen
 - Solving problems is not necessarily the goal



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Taking Care of Yourself

- ▶ Find a way to reduce or compartmentalize your stressors
- ▶ Get a hobby that results in something you can complete
 - So you can see the results of your efforts
- ▶ Take time for yourself
 - Even brief periods of time each day to do something you enjoy
 - Practice self care



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Why Self-Care is Important

Noma Nazish for Forbes

- ▶ Know your worth
- ▶ A healthy work-life balance
- ▶ Stress management
- ▶ Start living, stop existing
- ▶ Better physical health

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/payout/2017/09/19/practicing-self-care-is-important-10-easy-habits-to-get-you-started/#46584de4283a>



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Self-Care

- ▶ Guided imagery
- ▶ Deep breathing
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Yoga/Tai Chi
- ▶ Healthy diet
 - A treat from time to time is important
 - Eat regular meals
- ▶ Regular sleep routine
- ▶ Participate in a spiritual/cultural activity



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Self-Care

- ▶ Reading a “fun” book
- ▶ A hobby
 - Preferably one that results in a finished project
- ▶ Exercise and/or play a sport
- ▶ Going for a walk regularly
- ▶ Taking a relaxing bath
- ▶ Listening to music you love
- ▶ Keep a journal



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Self-Care

- ▶ Go to the movies
- ▶ Go out with friends
- ▶ Set aside time for close relationships
 - Partners, children, other family
 - Do a fun activity regularly
- ▶ leave work at work to have time for home at home
- ▶ Laugh every day



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Resources for Self-Care

- ▶ There are many resources for self-care that can be found
- ▶ A few books are:
 - ▶ Self-Care for the Real World: Practical Self-care Advice for Everyday Life by Katia Narain Phillips and Nadia Narain
 - ▶ The Little Book of Self-Care by Mel Noakes
 - ▶ The Self-Care Project: How to Let Go of Frazzle and Make Time for You by Jayne Hardy



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Stress Management



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The Importance of Acknowledging and Dealing with Stress

- ▶ We all experience stress in our lives
 - We may experience stress in our work life, our home life, our personal life
- ▶ We all handle stress differently
- ▶ Stress affects our physical and emotional health
- ▶ We often dismiss the stress we experience
- ▶ If we don't find a way to manage stress, it continues to build
 - If we ignore it, it does not go away
- ▶ Stress causes the release of cortisol
 - A little is good; a lot is not



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Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ The cost of caring
- ▶ Physical, emotional, and/or spiritual fatigue that takes over a person
- ▶ Causes a decline in the ability to experience joy and care for oneself or others
- ▶ If stress is not addressed, it builds and interferes with day to day functioning
- ▶ Experienced by human service personnel as well as families



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The Worry Grid

- ▶ The purpose of the worry grid is to get a handle on addressing stress in your life
- ▶ There are several steps in the process
 - Identify your worries
 - Construct a grid
 - Identify what you can and cannot address
 - Develop steps to address that which you can control



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Ten Steps Towards Managing Stress

(Eshelman et al 1988)

- ▶ Identify symptoms of stress
- ▶ Identify sources of stress
- ▶ Identify how you respond to your particular stressors
- ▶ Set goals to respond more effectively
- ▶ Motivate yourself



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Ten Steps Towards Managing Stress

(Eshelman et al 1988)

- ▶ Change your thinking
- ▶ Deal with others
- ▶ When in conflict, negotiate
- ▶ Pace and balance yourself
- ▶ Know when to quit



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Clearly describe the situation that is causing stress
- ▶ Be aware of how you currently handle stress
 - Set a task to “observe yourself” and how you react
- ▶ Brainstorm alternative responses at times that are not stressful
 - Write down the alternatives
- ▶ Set realistic goals for yourself
 - Not “change all my reactions in every situation now”



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Make effective use of your time
 - Write a **realistic** “to do” list
 - Set priorities
 - Check off items accomplished
- ▶ Find something to “finish”
- ▶ Eat correctly
- ▶ Get enough sleep



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Exercise regularly
- ▶ Practice deep breathing
- ▶ Do what relaxes you
 - Listen to music
 - Take a hot bath
 - Get a massage
 - Read
- ▶ Learn progressive relaxation techniques
- ▶ Leave work at work



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Take time for yourself
 - Take an hour or a day for yourself
 - Take regular vacations
 - Use sick time when sick
- ▶ Find a way to have fun
 - At home
 - At work
- ▶ Do something that results in a concrete product
 - Art; craft; writing
 - You may have to find something that can be completed in a short period of time



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Identify strengths in yourself and those around you
 - Write down each person's strengths
 - Review them regularly
 - Add to the lists
- ▶ Give yourself credit for what you do accomplish and have accomplished in the past
- ▶ Don't take on inappropriate guilt
 - Try not to take on the "superperson" or "rescue" syndrome
- ▶ Recognize there is a balance of "success" and "failure"
- ▶ Forgive others and yourself



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Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Have faith in yourself and others
- ▶ Keep in touch with your spirit
- ▶ Love and appreciate yourself
- ▶ Take care of yourself
- ▶ Keep a sense of humor
- ▶ RELAX!!

