Mindful Self-Care for Parents of Children with DYRK1A Syndrome

Yes, it is possible.

Lynn Vigo, LICSW
Learning Objectives for Today

- Increase awareness and understanding of stress associated with parenting a child with extra needs

- Identify 2 good reasons for caring for self while caring for others.

- Identify 2 mindfulness strategies aimed at reducing stress.
My inspiration
Ironic, isn’t it?

- Not my life’s work. December 1982
- Just be glad it isn’t autism. January 1999
- It’s autism. July 1999
- It’s CHD8. July 2017
Why does self-care matter?

If not **you**, then who?
What does self-care look like for ***YOU***?????

- What do I need?
- What makes me smile?
- Equal importance
- “Comparison is the thief of joy”
- Reframe (BK vs. AK)
A Funny Thing Happened
Before

Princess & The Pea
Sleep: Reframed

After

Backseat of my car
Optimal Conditions
Closet Meditator
Relaxing
Before
Vacation in My Mind

- Lounge chair
- Sunglasses
- Magazine
- Cool Drink
Why Mindfulness?

- Disrupted sleep
- GI troubles
- Challenging behaviors
- Picky eating
- IEP
- Insurance
- Perseverative behavior
- Public perception
- Work
- Other kids
- Elderly parents
- Household chores
- Blood draws
- Multitasking
- Autopilot
- Haircut
- Picky eating
- 50K thoughts a day
- Haircut
- Household chores
- Public perception
- What to fix for dinner
- To Do list
- Yesterday/tomorrow
Best Reason

IF YOU CHANGE NOTHING, NOTHING WILL CHANGE
What is mindfulness?

It is:
- Mindset for how we relate to our experiences
- Paying attention in the present moment - with curiosity and kindness
- “It is what it is”
- For anyone who wants to improve focus and decrease stress
- Effective (evidence-based and anecdotal)

It is not:
- Stopping or changing thoughts
- Only meditation
Let’s Try It, Shall We?

Present Moment Awareness: minutes
Choose something pleasing to focus on.
Look closely. See it in detail.
If mind wanders, gently return to focus.

Deep Breaths: minutes
Bring attention to breath.
Inhale to count of 4.
Exhale to count of 5.
Do 4 times.
Mindful Eating

- Look closely before putting in mouth.
- Smell it.
- Feel it.
- Tip of tongue.
- Let it sit on tongue.
- Savor it.
- Thanks!
Brief Meditation

- Get comfortable.
- Gently close your eyes.
- Take 2-3 deep breaths in and out. Return to normal.
- Notice surroundings. Turn down volume in brain.
- Notice thoughts, feelings. Name it to tame it.
- Notice tension/tightness in body.
- Focus for minutes. Word/utterance/image/breath.
- Let go of focus. Awareness of surroundings return.
- Now gently open your eyes.
Self-Compassion Exercise

- Gently close your eyes and call to mind a memory of a difficult situation with your child.
- Acknowledge the difficulty. This is hard. This hurts. (mindfulness)
- We all struggle. I’m not the only one. Other parents struggle too. Life is hard. (common humanity)
- Ask yourself what you need right now.
- May I find patience. May I find peace. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself. (kindness)
- Draw your attention to the other parents in this room. Feel the depth of the connection amongst us, our common humanity.
- Say something to all of us: We are deserving of the same love and compassion we give to our children.
Final Thoughts

- If you think you can't do this, you won't.
- No good reasons not to try.
- You're worth it.
- You won't regret it.
- You'll thank yourself 10 years from now.
What Questions Do You Have?
Resources

- Headspace (guided meditation app)
- Stop, Think, Breathe (guided meditation app)
- Breathe, Think, Do (app for kids)
- self-compassion.org Kristin Neff, PhD self-compassion scale
“It’s funny: I always imagined when I was a kid that adults had some kind of inner toolbox full of shiny tools: the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom, the sandpaper of patience.

But then when I grew up, I found that life handed you these rusty bent old tools - friendships, prayer, conscience, honesty - and said 'do the best you can with these, they will have to do'.

And mostly, against all odds, they do.”

Anne Lamott, Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith