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# Fostering your child's well-being through Relationship & Self-compassion

**DR. ELYSE REDDEN & ALLISON SINGH**

*Adapted by Marian Mainland, C. Psych. Assoc., Insight Psychology*

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF WELLINGTON COUNTY

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Being a parent is hard...

My kid, every time  
I use the bathroom



**..but also incredible!**

# What is “Self-Compassion”

- ▶ A practice and a journey
- ▶ A daily intention to shift our inner dialogue and feeling about ourselves to be more gentle and warm
- ▶ Building a kinder relationship with ourselves

# Self- Compassion as a Parent

- ▶ Have you ever felt:
  - ▶ that you are not a good parent or feel inadequate?
  - ▶ that you should be grateful for your children?
  - ▶ that your friends are much better parents?
  - ▶ that you are all alone and no other parent faces your challenges?
  - ▶ that you need to be perfect?

# Self-Compassion as a Parent

- ▶ **“You cannot pour from an empty cup”**
- ▶ Building a sense of warmth toward ourselves can open many emotions
- ▶ We cannot show compassion to others if we don't have it for ourselves
- ▶ Any type of trauma or having a child with some type of disorder is going to make it even more challenging
- ▶ We often feel deep shame when we “lose our cool”
- ▶ When you try your best, that is all you can do
  
- ▶ It is okay to ask for help

# IMAGINE

- ▶ A recent event where you “lost it” with one of your children
- ▶ Someone close to you is feeling really bad about themselves or struggling in some way...
- ▶ How would you respond, when you’re at your best?
- ▶ Be specific:
  - ▶ What would you do?
  - ▶ What would you say?
  - ▶ What is the tone of your voice?

# Growth Mind-Set

- ▶ our abilities in our brains are not fixed, but are growing every day
- ▶ expecting perfection sets us up for failure-we become reactive rather than proactive
- ▶ we end up blowing up when our kids blow up
- ▶ our children watch how we handle stress
- ▶ need to teach our children self-love

# Self-Compassion

- ▶ You cannot be a good parent if you are always being too hard on yourself
- ▶ Accepting imperfections makes us less anxious and will lead to greater inner peace, happiness and optimism



# Reduce stress, anxiety and guilt

- take several deep breaths
- perspective-how important will this moment be next year?
- stop multi-tasking; deal with one thing at a time, take time to respond to your child and listen to what they are saying, make them feel important
- no more “shoulding” on yourself; we all have things we “should do” but the world won’t end if we don’t get them done
- talk to yourself the same way you would talk to a friend
- take regular breaks and don’t feel guilty-build energy and self-compassion
- take turns with your spouse/friend and tell them you need help

# Brene Brown

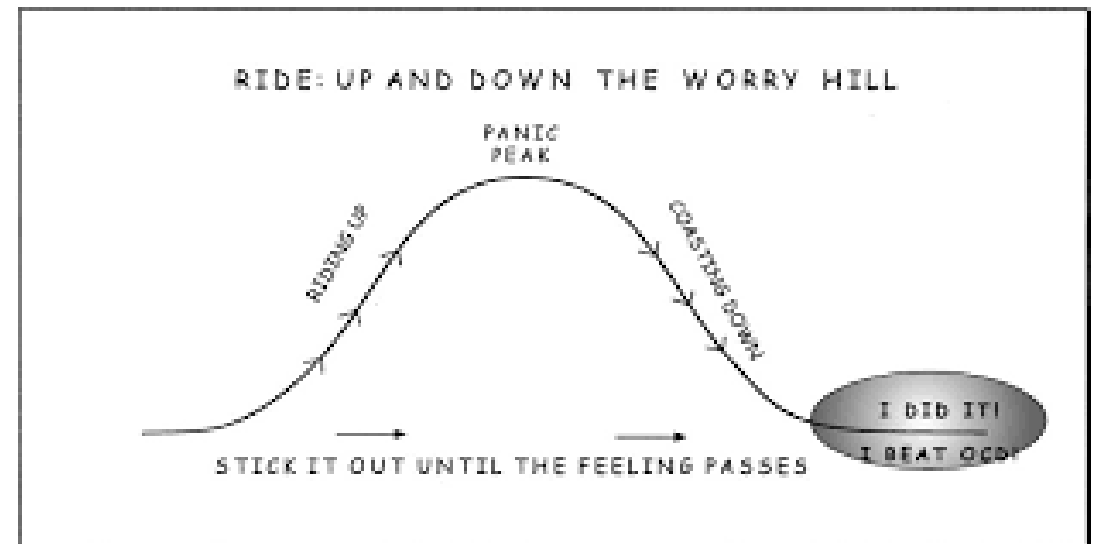
Think of your family's life as a photo album. When you look through it, some photos are flattering but some were taken during hard times. Look at the whole album, not just part of it.

It represents love, belonging and acceptance.

# Communication- Feelings

Showing your child that you hear and accept their feelings helps them feel that they are important

- ▶ All feelings are okay (even the “negative ones”)
  - ▶ Rather than saving your child from emotions, be with them through it
- ▶ Not all actions are okay - boundaries



A. Wagner (2002)

# Here's How:

- ▶ Be physically close and show you're available
- ▶ Listen with full attention
- ▶ Acknowledge with a word ("I see..." "oh!" "hmmm..")
- ▶ Give it a name, reflect the feeling:
  - ▶ "Wow, you must feel angry"
  - ▶ "Fast Food Rule"- repeat back what you hear
- ▶ Use soothing words and remind of strategies
- ▶ Avoid giving advice immediately
- ▶ Remember: Acknowledging ≠ Agreeing  
(2008)



(Faber & Maxlish, 2012; Karp,

# What if they cross the line?

- ▶ Offer choices
- ▶ Tell them you don't approve of what was said/done and re-frame it:
  - ▶ Child: "I hate you! You're so mean"  
Parent: "I didn't like what I just heard. If you're angry about something, try to tell me another way and then maybe I can help"
  - ▶ "I can see how angry you are with your brother, tell him what you want with words, not fists"
- ▶ Discuss further when they are calm

# Problem Solving

- ▶ Involve your child in discussions about solutions when everyone is calm
  - ▶ Collaborative Proactive Solutions (Green, 2014)
- ▶ Use behavioural strategies (i.e. rewards and consequences) as appropriate and to your comfort
  - ▶ Agreed upon by all members of household
  - ▶ Clear
  - ▶ Consistent



# Watch Out!

- ▶ Have you or your child “Flipped Their Lid”? (Siegel)
  - ▶ [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw)
  - ▶ Use a calming strategy – breathing, physical release, “draw your feeling”
- ▶ Are your expectations reasonable?
  - ▶ Do they know HOW to do what I am asking?
  - ▶ Am I using appropriate vocabulary?
  - ▶ Am I asking my AD/HD child to “stop and think”?
- ▶ Be aware of your child’s cues
- ▶ Know your child’s learning profile...

Processing Deficit	Tips
Attention	Keep it short
Language	Keep it simple Think of a “younger” child
Processing Speed	Speak slowly Allow time for child to process/ respond
Visual Spatial	Don't expect visual cues to be read - body language, facial expressions, gestures, etc.
Working Memory	1-2 points at a time
Sensory	Speak calmly/softly Stand still Physical distance (close or far)
Auditory Processing	Simple language Move to quiet location (if possible) Speech volume
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Difficulty understanding others' perspectives

\* In general, less is more when it comes to language\*



# Repair

- ▶ We all make mistakes and it is okay to admit it:
  - ▶ “I’ve been thinking about what you tried to tell me before, that really must have upset you. I’m sorry I wasn’t ready to listen but I am now”
  - ▶ “I am sorry that I got frustrated before, can we talk about it again?”
- ▶ Fixing relationship breakdowns:
  - ▶ Spend time- do something fun with your child, make time, build positive experiences
  - ▶ Just listen- no judgement or advice giving
  - ▶ Model vulnerability- share a problem you are having with them
  - ▶ Start small and be patient
  - ▶ Focus on praise & telling them what you like about them (compassion)

# References & Resources

- ▶ “The Happiest Toddler on the Block” (Harvey Karp)
- ▶ “How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk” (Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish)
- ▶ “Up and Down the Worry Hill” (Aureen Pinto Wagner)
- ▶ “The Explosive Child” (Ross Greene) or [www.livesinthebalance.org/](http://www.livesinthebalance.org/)
- ▶ “The Whole-Brain Child” (Daniel Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson)

