

Module 3 – Being the adult you want your child to become!

PARENT SELF-CARE 101



The trifecta of healthy self-care includes physical, emotional, and spiritual components. When we take good care of ourselves, we are able to take good care of those we love most. Some of us are good at one of these things, maybe two, but rarely (without some conscious effort on our part) are we practicing regular, healthy self-care in all three areas.

The first step is complete a realistic assessment of where you stand in each area, then focus on where you want to improve, and finally for us to brainstorm a reasonable, achievable plan to boost the area(s) you need to work on in order to create the healthiest scenario and optimal outcome for yourself (with your family directly benefitting).

Let's begin the work with this self-assessment of how well you take care of your body's (physical) needs.

Grab your journal to keep a record of your thoughts and answers to the following assessment...



My physical well-being...

1. Do I make time for physical activity? If so, how often?
2. What physical demands are put on my body during an average day in my life?
3. What kinds of physical activities do I enjoy and am I making time for these on a regular basis...why, or why not?
4. If I haven't been spending enough time taking care of my body, what is getting in the way of this? What can honestly be done with my schedule to create additional time (if needed) to make my physical care a priority area of life?
5. Beyond exercise, how well do I take care of my body?
6. Do I make healthy food choices, or is this an area I could improve on? What about sleep, do I get enough uninterrupted shut eye most nights? Why, or why not?
7. How often do I drink alcohol? Smoke cigarettes? Take mind-altering medication?
8. Are any of these things getting in the way of taking care of me physically?
9. Do I exercise with my family? What are some ways our family could incorporate exercise into our time together?

10. Where would I like to see myself improve in the area of physical self-care and **BIG** question...*what am I willing to do to make that happen?*

Taking good care of the body you live in means committing to using all of it regularly. It also means getting in to the doctor for preventative physicals, dental health, and recommended screenings as you get older. You can't expect your child to take good care of himself (getting enough rest, making healthy food choices, staying away from unhealthy choices like drug and alcohol use) unless you are living out those for him to see.

Our kids are great at waving the B.S. flag at us *when we aren't doing* what we tell them to do. They may do this through words and/or behavior. The older they get, the more aware they become, so now is the best time to make changes where necessary to feel better about you, in the process of showing them that as busy as life can get as an adult, for the sake of good health and keeping stress levels in check, exercise/healthy diet/enough rest is essential! And, if your parents weren't the best example of taking care of themselves, that's no excuse for you to follow their pattern... in fact it's the very reason the pattern needs to change with you for future generations of your family.



My emotional well-being...

Throughout this course and our work together we are addressing your childhood and your parenting; your emotional health is the second of three components in keeping harmony and balance within, which of course is then reflected out into the relationships with others.

I believe there are a lot of kids today with emotional challenges like anxiety, depression, and stress because the adults in their lives are living with unacknowledged or unprocessed emotional hurts stemming from their own upbringing.

We can get stuck in negative self-talk, spending too much time beating ourselves or others up over what's happened in the past (not to mention being preoccupied with future events that may never happen), a major negative side effect of the victim mentality is we miss out on fully appreciating the present moment connections with others in our life today.

Slowing down to identify the emotions we are experiencing, allowing them to flow through us, and being conscious of the story we are telling ourselves about a situation are all contributing factors to our emotional well-being.

Another benefit of taking good emotional care of yourself is becoming more readily available for an essential task of parenting...being an empathic listener for our children when they need (or want) us to be present and supportive of them. For example when they are experiencing the break up of a romance or a fall out with a friend, a challenge in a class at school, or even just questioning life in general as they move along this stage in their development.

If we don't tune into how we're feeling, how are we going to ask them to? If we don't acknowledge our challenges and work through them, we are modeling that it's okay to ignore or push down our feelings. It's not okay to model that kind of emotional dysfunction. Our kids need us to feel, process and work towards solutions to our problems so we can be available to support them as they do the same.

I didn't say solve their problems for them, I said **be available to support** them as they acknowledge/process/work towards solutions around the challenges they are facing.

It's also really important to know when to ask for professional help. There is nothing wrong with asking for the assistance of a qualified counselor when you are in over your head, or when you suspect your child is really challenged emotionally and your guidance just isn't enough. **We are parents, not perfect, remember!**

Jot the answers to the following questions in your journal so we can see where your emotional health practice stands.

1. How aware are you of your feelings? Do you know what you defer to when you are stressed? Anxious? Do you eat? Drink? Isolate? Describe what you realize in thinking about this question.
2. When you look through your past, do you see any patterns emerge around your emotional well-being? For example, some people tend toward depression during the winter months (seasonal affective disorder). If there is a pattern you notice, please describe this.
3. Is there a family history of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, or addiction? Describe.
4. What are you doing now in your daily life to address your emotional health and well-being? Is it enough? If not, where do you think you could improve?
5. What would it mean to your child (ren) if you took better care of making sure you were emotionally healthy?

Often times our physical and emotional health is connected...the mind/body experience is well documented. Sometimes if we aren't taking the time to exercise we begin to feel bad about ourselves which then lowers our energy level potentially creating a vicious circle!



My spiritual well-being...

The third component of self-care is spiritual well-being. I am not necessarily talking about any organized religious practice, though for some people that is truly important and a priority in their life. I am referring to the connection each of us is but a small part in a much bigger world picture.

A belief there is something bigger than ourselves (you may call it God, or the Universe, Energy, Jehovah, ...or something else) and that we are all connected.

It's time to think about what you really believe spiritually.

I am going briefly share my personal experience on spirituality in the hopes it inspires you to think about how this area of your life affects what you are experiencing and also how it impacts the relationships with your partner and children.

Here it goes...

I was raised Catholic, but not much was said in our family about God outside of our weekly Sunday mass and meal/bedtime prayers. I had a very basic understanding of Jesus' life, his birth and death, and that I was supposed to obey God's Commandments or I would go to Hell when I died.

For most of my life I had a very elemental understanding of the origin of who had created me and who had final say in what happened to me once I died.

When my husband and I married, we looked at alternative options to a Catholic service because though we'd both been raised Catholic, we each had some questions and reservations about our faith practices. In the end, mainly out of tradition and because of what our families might think if we chose to marry another way, we had a traditional Catholic ceremony in the church. Consequently, for the same reasons, we had our children baptized the following years in the church as well.

For decades after, we followed suit by attending mass on Sundays, enrolling our kids in the necessary Religious Education classes, making sure they had all of their sacraments completed on time. But, all the while I felt unsettled and continued to question what I believed.

If God loves me and celebrates my unique, special being...why would he ever punish me so severely when I die? Could it be that someone never attend a church service and die and go to Heaven anyway just based on the life they've lived? These were just one of many things my mind and heart struggled with.

In December 2015 I happened to hear a speaker at a parenting convention I attended that changed my entire view of who/what God is...why we are here living this physical life, and what really happens when we pass away. The message completely resonated with, and answered all of the questions I'd always had about God and religion.

The change of direction in my spiritual understanding has resulted in a closer relationship to what I call God ever since that time! I have continued to read books on the topic of spirituality and to seek the thoughts of other's experiences as I more clearly define my truth about God/life/after life.

Faith, spirituality, religion is a very personal journey, what I am asking you below is to think about where you are right now and what might be possible for you to see more clearly in the future as far as what you believe about the BIG questions...like what is life all about anyway?

Pull out that pen and let's get to it!

1. What religious practices or beliefs were you raised with? Have you continued to observe the same as an adult? Why, or why not? Give details here...
2. What role does God (the Universe, Jehovah, Yahweh, the Creator, the Maker...) play in your life now? How important is your spiritual practice? Describe.
3. How are you imparting your spiritual beliefs on your family? Are you open to their questioning or believing something different than you do? Why or why not?
4. Would you like to see something change in this area of your life, if so what would it be?

Like I said, an affiliation with a specific organized religion, a spiritual practice, your personal belief system is often a life long journey and very unique to each of us. Being open-minded can be helpful, especially when it comes to your kids as they begin to naturally question during their adolescence.

We'll talk about your thoughts from this exercise during our next session. Until then, please take a moment to summarize where you see you need or want to change or improve in order to be more present to your family. We will also work through a new, improved self-care routine to take you forward!

Nothing changes if nothing changes, right?