Self Care for Parents

Self-care is giving the world the best of you, instead of what's left of you."
— Katie Reed

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way we live, from our work to our learning to our social lives. Our current reality poses a unique set of challenges for all of us, and even more so for parents e.g. managing work from home along with balancing parental responsibilities, overseeing children's online schooling etc. When we as parents are feeling depleted of our physical, mental and emotional resources, it inevitably reflects in our relationship with children. Now more than ever, practicing self-care is essential when it comes to taking care of our overall health and well-being.

As parents, some of the simple ways in which we can take care of ourselves include checking in with ourselves about how we're feeling, taking mindful breaks from our parental responsibilities, dividing our roles and responsibilities among the adults more equitably, and building a strong community of support.

Some **simple practices of self-care** for us to incorporate in this time of the pandemic to help us feel recharged and be empathetically present for our children could be:

Consistent routine: Following a consistent,(yet flexible in content) daily routine, builds predictability for ourselves, as well as our children, and helps us stay grounded. For example bringing consistency to mealtimes, having an

"unwinding time", Friday evening family time etc may be good ways to make certain parts of the day or week consistent.

Energising with a balanced Eat-Move-Sleep: Daily practices that nourish your body are essential for a calm, relaxed mind. Make sure you eat healthy, eat on time, and eat slowly. Move your body in whatever ways you can manage or whatever feels best for you - dancing, yoga, stretching, lifting weights, or simply walking for a few minutes everyday. There is a deep relationship between sleep and our emotional well-being; hence, maintaining sleep hygiene is essential. What works is making sure that you get enough exercise through the day, eat your dinner before 8 pm,not stay on your screens later than 10 pm and get into bed at the same time every night to build a natural rhythm.

Joy diet- Do 5 small things daily that bring joy to you and make you feel good. These could be as simple as singing out loud, taking some time out for a short nap during the day or simply cooking a nice meal for yourself. To understand more, refer to *All you Need is Love* (by Shelja Sen).

Self-compassion and Acceptance- Acknowledging & accepting what's in our control; ask yourselves this - "**What's in my circle of control/influence and what's outside my circle of control/influence**". Bringing our awareness and acceptance to what is within our circle of control/influence is likely to help us move towards the hopes we may have, or explore possible solutions or coping with the problems, and give more importance to what we value in life. It also helps us to reframe our expectations and goals from our children, as well as ourselves, specially in the current context.

A few other ways in which we can engage in self-care:

1. **Mindfulness practice:** Being mindful refers to being fully present in the moment, aware of where we are and what we are doing. It refers to the ability to take a pause within our daily lives, slow down our mind, and free up our mental space to be able to re-orient. Some simple ways and daily

moments where we can incorporate mindfulness include mealtimes, bath time or before sleeping. It may be helpful to check in with yourself towards the end of the day: "*how mindful was I today with myself, and my children on a scale of 1 to 10?*". Calming and grounding activities can also help to build on mindfulness for ourselves - Maybe give yourself cues throughout the day —e.g. every time your phone buzzes, just become mindful of any tension you might be carrying in your body and gently breathe into it. Another trick that you could do is to use your 'healing hands' and gently rub them where you are experiencing tension, and slowly let them go.

2. **Gratitude or reflective time**- Gratitude is a key practice to self-care. Look within and around you for tiny things you wish to feel grateful for.

Some prompt questions for gratitude time: Take a few minutes every evening or whenever you feel like it to reflect on the following:

- What are the 5 things I did today that I feel good about?
- What has someone else done that I am happy with? Did I react in such a way that this person will perhaps do something like that again?
- What did I see, hear, feel, smell, taste, that I liked?

Some questions that you may ask yourself during present times:

- What have I found that is helping me manage my stressful situations?
- What helps me to keep going?
- Who and what are my support systems?
- What will I engage in today that will bring me joy?

Playfulness Quotient: Playfulness Quotient refers to our ability to be fun,

playful and silly, by channelizing the inner child within us, and just enjoying our time with our children. This means that when we play with our children, we emphasize upon the quality of our interaction with them, and join them in whatever way we can. For example, it could just be about laughing and giggling with your child spontaneously and uninhibitedly, joining in with them in their world of imaginations and pretend-play, or a simple and fun game of tickles with them. Play in any form can cause a cascade of positive neurochemicals like serotonin, oxytocin, and dopamine.

Some more helpful resources on our YouTube Channel:

- *The Art of Mindful Parenting - Care*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssUvK7DlY1s
- *The Art of Mindful parenting - 5C Model*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdaJ740jqpE
- *How to Connect with your child? Tips and strategies*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcag9n1S0Ko
- *The Art of Mindful Parenting - Commit*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ybPK3mnSFI
- The Art of Mindful Parenting - Coach
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X90W9xgrbvg
- The Art of Mindful Parenting - Ways to Coach your child
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMDAKJ4IUUo