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Be There for Others: The Importance of Self-Care

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Meet Your Instructor

- Patti Matestic, Ph.D.,
Clinical Psychologist,
Director- UW Autism
Center Tacoma
- ASD evaluations, outpatient
therapy, training team
- Expertise in comorbid
medical conditions, mood
management, and
developmental disabilities



Workshop Objectives

- Why is self-care important?
- Common barriers to self-care
 - Unique challenges related to ASD
- Strategies to establish, prioritize, and maintain self-care
- Resources
 - ASD specific resources



THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE



Definition of Self-care

- Oxford Dictionary:
 - “the practice of taking action to *preserve* or *improve* one’s own *health*”
 - “the practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness, in particular *during periods of stress*”



Importance of Self-care

- Physical Health
 - Immunity, chronic disease, mortality
- Brain Health
 - Attention, learning, processing speed
- Emotional Health
 - Mood, relationships, stress management



Consequences of Poor Self-care

- Less present for your friends and family
- Reduced life satisfaction
- Does not model healthy coping for your children
- Does not show others how you want to be treated
- Unable to effectively care for others



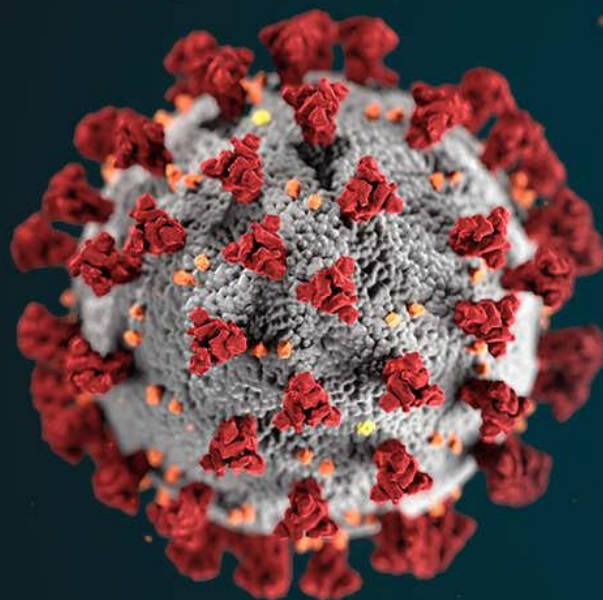
BARRIERS TO SELF-CARE



Common Barriers to Self-care

- Guilt
- Time management – how to prioritize
- Lack of additional support
- Financial constraints
- Limited knowledge or information
- Stressors





COVID-19



Challenges related to ASD

- Receiving & processing the diagnosis
- Parental stress
 - Increased levels of stress as compared to parents of neurotypical or other DD children
(Estes, et. al., 2009; Baker et. al., 2002; Dumas et. al., 1991)
- Frequent co-occurring medical/behavioral conditions
 - Sleep problems, Seizures, genetic conditions, ID, ADHD, anxiety, sensory differences
(Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network- ADDM - Levy et al., 2010)
- Fewer family outings and vacations
(Hutton & Caron, 2005)



IF YOU WANT TO TAKE CARE
OF OTHERS...

YOU MUST FIRST TAKE CARE
OF YOURSELF!!!!



SELF-CARE STRATEGIES



How to care for yourself

- Understand yourself:
 - Ask yourself where does my support and strength come from?
 - How am I really doing?
 - What do I need?
 - What recharges me?
 - Who to ask for help?
 - Build in regular time to check-in with self



How to care for yourself

- Give yourself time to adjust to change
- Self-care is a habit – practice daily!
- Maintain schedule & family rituals when possible
- Don't isolate



Self-care tips:

- Start with the basics:
 - Sleep
 - Exercise
 - Nutrition
- Build a support network
 - Partner
 - Family
 - Friends & Community



Building a Support Network: Partner Relationship

- **Keeping Your Relationship Strong**
 - Communicate!
 - Talk openly about problems
 - Be kind to yourself and your partner
 - Work together
 - Stay in the present
 - Spend time together
 - Share responsibilities at home
 - Get help if you need it



Building a Support Network: Family & Sibling Support

- Provide family members with resources to better understand autism
- Help siblings learn how to play and form relationships with their brother or sister.
- Find local sibling or family support groups (e.g., sib shops)
- Extended family move closer for support



Building a Support Network: Friends and Community

- Nurture friendships
- Faith based support - church
- Social Networking –find support online
- Local support groups
- Recreational programs



Self-care tips:

- Find your Bliss
 - The Big List of Pleasurable Activities
- Improve the Moment Skills
 - Quick things to make a moment better
- Self-soothe
 - Use your five senses

Find Your Bliss

- The Big Book of Pleasurable Activities
 - <http://www.englishtherapy.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Big-List-of-Pleasurable-Activities.doc>



Improve the Moment*

- Imagery:
 - imagine relaxing scenes, imagine things going well, imagine difficult emotion draining out of your body
- Meaning:
 - find purpose for situation
 - make lemons out of lemonade
- Prayer:
 - turn things over to your higher power, utilize religion

*Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) – Marsha Linehan



Improve the Moment*

- Relaxation:
 - tense/relax large muscle groups
 - exercise hard
 - take a hot bath
 - drink warm beverage
 - breathe deeply
- One thing in the moment:
 - focus your entire attention on present activity
 - keep yourself in the moment

*Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) – Marsha Linehan



Improve the Moment*

- Vacation:
 - An actual vacation or a brief break from your regular routine
 - Walk
 - Meet with friends
 - Take a shower
- Encouragement:
 - Be honest with yourself, provide realistic and hopeful encouragement
 - “This too shall pass”

*Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) – Marsha Linehan



Self-soothe using your 5 senses

- Taste – have a good meal, tea, coffee, smoothie, treat yourself to dessert, put whipped cream on your hot chocolate or coffee
- Touch – Take a bubble bath, have a massage, soak your feet/pedicure, put lotion on your whole body



Self-soothe using your 5 senses

- Vision – buy one beautiful flower, enjoy nature, fix your nails, look at pictures in a book
- Hearing – Listen to soothing music, books on tape, pay attention to sounds of nature (bird songs, rain, leaves rustling)
- Smell – use your favorite perfume or lotion, spray fragrance in the air, light a scented candle, bake cookies



More Self-care Tips

- Utilize respite care or childcare options
- Therapy – individual, parenting, marital
- Positive self talk - mantras
- Explore new hobbies - interests outside of autism
- Get involved with Autism Community
- Schedule self-care time or activities



“Talk to yourself like you would to
someone you love.”
Brené Brown



National ASD Resources

- Autism Society
 - Autism info, advocacy, education, and support
 - www.autism-society.org
- Autism National Standards Project
 - List of evidenced based treatments for Autism
 - <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/national-standards-project/results-reports/>
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
 - Seeks to advance Autism self-advocacy and disability rights
 - www.autisticadvocacy.org www.autismacceptancemonth.com
- Autism Speaks
 - Resource finder and free informational toolkits
 - www.autismspeaks.org
- Thinking Person's Guide to Autism
 - Mission is to provide carefully selected, evidenced-based, neurodiversity-steeped information from autistic people, parents, and professionals
 - Great article for parents of newly diagnosed children found at this link:
 - <http://www.thinkingautismguide.com/2017/03/after-autism-diagnosis-13-necessary.html>
- Organization for Autism Research (OAR)
 - Resources and info on Autism, toolkits for parents and educators
 - <https://researchautism.org/>



ASD Parent Support Resources

Local Autism Support Agencies:

- PAVE – Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment
 - www.wapave.org
- Pierce County Coalition for Developmental Disabilities (PC2)
 - <https://www.pc2online.org/>
- ARC – For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
 - www.thearc.org
- WAAA – Washington Autism Alliance and Advocacy
 - Legal counsel and advice; www.washingtonautismadvocacy.org
- Lewis County Autism Coalition–
 - www.lcautism.org
- WA State Father's Network
 - <https://fathersnetwork.org/>



Resources - Books

- *The Autism Mom's Survival Guide (for Dads, too!): Creating a Balanced and Happy Life While Raising a Child with Autism* by Susan Senator
- *More Than a Mom* by Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett
- *Finding Our Way: Practical Solutions for Creating a Supportive Home and Community for the Asperger Syndrome Family* by Kristi Sakai
- *Helping Your Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Step-By-Step Workbook for Families* by Locksin, Gillis, and Romanczyk
- *Thoughts and Feelings: Taking Control of Your Moods and Your Life* by McKay, Davis, and Fanning
- *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* by Davis, Eshelman, and McKay
- *The Gifts of imperfection* by Brene Brown



Wrap-Up Housekeeping

- Handouts
- Attendance verification
- Feedback/survey
- Certificate of Completion
- Clock hours



Questions?

Thank you for attending!



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