



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

GRACE FOR CAREGIVERS

"When parents feel accepted and supported...they seem to be able to engage in self-reflection – specifically relating to their parenting styles. In turn, their ability to reflect and make sense of their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This seems to have a positive influence on the process of change in themselves, their children and other family members."
(Levac, McCay, Merka and Reddon D'Arcy, 2008)

Caregivers are the backbone of families in today's world.
Caregivers work for free – hours vary and are often long.
Caregivers seldom complain or ask to be rewarded
for all their efforts.
Caregivers are there for the good times –
and not so good times.

One of the best gifts we can give ourselves (& our children) is our own emotional mental health. Be intentional about taking care of yourself – especially in this stressful time. For the past few months, caregivers have been parents, teachers and responsible for our jobs – most of those being carried out in our homes. Even for us multi taskers, this can be overwhelming. We cannot expect ourselves to be all these things – everyday. We need to give ourselves grace.

How do we do this – especially when a family is large, has various stressors even on good days. We do this by remembering what the airline steward always says: 'In case of an emergency, place the oxygen mask on yourself first, then assist your child with hers.' It's that simple: we caregivers must keep breathing before we can take care of our children.


Speaking of breathing, that's a good place to begin: THREE DEEP breaths, inhaling through the nose, exhaling out the mouth. Yes, seems simple, but has been proven to relax the body and refresh the brain. Try it – it works!

Today and tomorrow, just be kind to yourself. Take that break, have that darn donut, laugh at yourself and ask for help when you need it. We can't be everything to everyone everyday –

stop trying. Just do the best you can with what you have, where you are and with what patience and love you can muster for that very moment.

And yes, I know COVID-19 has added a huge stressor that impacts our daily routines, our relationships and our sense of security. Our children too have lost their little worlds, but we can learn a lot about resilience from them. Take the time to watch how they adapt and how they still play. PLAY with them; go outside and play in Mother Nature. (See Nature's Deficits attached.) The good news is that She is free, easily accessible with many activities to be found in her wide and wonderful world. We have forgotten the many, many things we can do outside. The benefits of this simple, free activity are boundless!

Last, but not least, write down all your "shoulds" (or your 'to do list'), then let go of a few of them – quite a few of them! Explore softening your expectations. Experience GRACE.



"A mother's best
masterpiece is
her children."

"Nature Deficit Disorder"

Outdoor exercise (compared to indoor exercise) is effective at reducing depression and anxiety. Nature Deficit Disorder is used to describe the human costs of:

- Alienation from nature
- Attention difficulties
- Higher rates of physical & emotional illnesses
- Higher rates of myopia (i.e. lack of imagination or intellectual insight.)
- Child and adult obesity

MEET CENTENNIAL'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION TEAM



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Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson,
Lincoln & Yuma

For additional support during
the COVID-19 Pandemic you
can call Centennial's
**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT LINE**

You can do this by calling your
nearest Centennial office:

Akron - 970.345.2254

Burlington - 719.346.8183

Cheyenne Wells - 719.346.8183

Elizabeth - 303.646.4519

Fort Morgan - 970.867.4924

Holyoke - 970.854.2114

Julesburg - 970.474.3769

Limon - 719.775.2313

Sterling - 970.522.4392

Wray - 970.332.3133

Yuma - 970.848.5412

Contact your local Centennial Mental Health Center for assistance with any Early Childhood need.

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