

PARENTING IN A PANDEMIC

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OVERVIEW



Age &
Stage



Parenting
Strategies



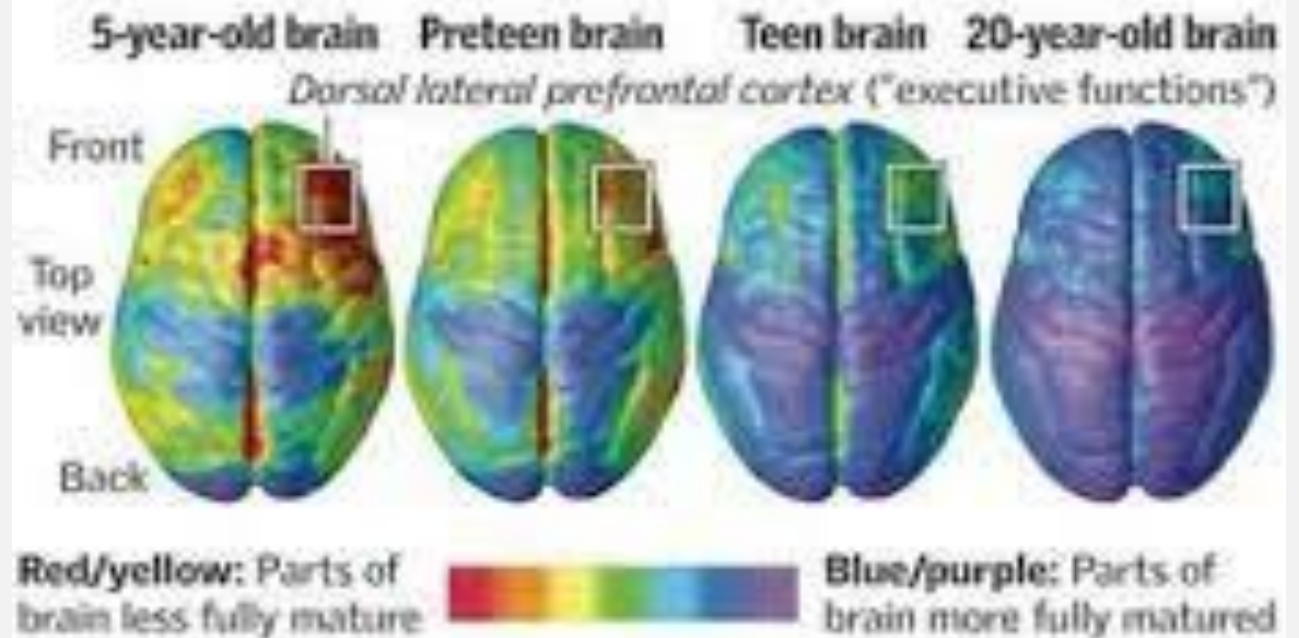
Self Care

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Motor Skills (writing, building, creating, skipping, walking backwards)
- Communication Skills (can start to talk about situations and feelings)
- Emotional Skills (building emotion regulation skills is important).

Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls "executive functions" — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:



Sources: National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

3-5 years old

Growing Independence

&

Support and Boundaries

Needed

- **Building your relationship and offering support and boundaries as your child learns new skills.**
 - Continue to read to your child. Encourage their love for books and learning..
 - Allow your preschooler to begin helping with simple chores.
 - Support your child in playing with other children. This creates opportunities to learn new social skills like sharing, working out disagreements, and building friendships.
 - Be clear and consistent when disciplining your child. Explain and show the behavior that you expect from them. Whenever you tell them no, follow up with what they should be doing instead.
 - Assist your child in their developing language skills by speaking to them in complete sentences and using “grown up” words.
 - Offer support and problem-solving steps to your child, when they are facing a problem.
 - Give your child a limited number of simple choices (for example, deciding what to wear, when to play, and what to eat for snack).

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

- **Foster Competency (Positive Parenting)**
 - Help set routines working with their temperament (eg, if they have regular homework or reading time, let them set a schedule or location to perform tasks. Give them simple timers or alarm clocks to keep track of time)
- **Social-Emotional development**
 - Get involved
 - Ask questions about their day
 - Set play dates with classmates and friends, meet up at parks, bike rides, hikes, etc.
- **Conversation Starters**
 - Who did you eat lunch with today?
 - What did you do at recess?
 - Is there anyone you would like to play with on the weekend?

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS



- Help them understand themselves: who they are and who they want to become
- Practice feelings identification and emotional regulation
- Encourage compassion rather than perfection
- Normalize changes from puberty
- **Conversation starters**
- Let's do a family pizza and movie night outside. Who do you want to invite?
- Who do you sit with at lunch? What is everyone talking about?
- Who do you remember from distance learning...who is different in person than you thought?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Help them find independence, belonging, and purpose
- Teens are wired for social connection: peer acceptance and social status are crucial
- Talk about their “new purpose” and help them “grieve” the past 2 years
- Communicate shared family expectations, but let them choose their methods to achieve them
- Foster their need for belonging by creating invitations to socialize without pressure
- **Conversation Starters**
- Do you remember distance learning when you or others had their video off? What do you do when you feel like that now?
- What is lunch like at school? Do you like the social norms at play? Do you talk about this with friends?
- Tell me more about what news you’re paying attention to.
- What are you dreaming about? How can we break your dream into smaller action steps?



HEALTH FOR CHILDREN

- Eat meals with your child whenever possible. Model healthy eating at mealtimes, allowing your child to see you enjoying fruits, vegetables, and healthy snacks. Your child should eat and drink only a limited amount of food and beverages that contain added sugars, solid fats, or salt.
- Keep television sets out of your child's bedroom. Set limits for screen time for your child to no more than 1 hour per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.
- Provide opportunities for your kids to engage in active play. Create chances to have fun while getting exercise.
- Make sure your child gets the recommended amount of sleep each night.

NURTURING THE PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP

- **Seen** —It means perceiving them deeply and empathically. Letting them know you see how they feel.
- **Safe** — we avoid actions and responses that frighten or hurt them
- **Soothed** — we help them deal with difficult emotions and situations
- **Secure** — we help them develop an internalized sense of well-being



POSITIVE PARENTING TECHNIQUES

- **Establishing a secure bond** with your child is important in increasing positive and desired behaviors. Children do what their parents say primarily because they care what parents think or how parents feel. Spending time giving your child positive attention strengthens your bond.
- **Spend time with your child on a regular basis** that is not centered around behavioral problems. Time focused for play, conversation, and relationship-building activities will build stronger bonds between you and your child. The more loved and understood your child feels by you, the easier it will be to manage his or her behavior.
- **Avoid criticism.** Often parents engage in telling children what not to do instead of what is expected. Provide your child with requests of the behavior you would like your child to engage in. Instead of saying “don't run”, try “please walk”. If you want your child to stop jumping on the bed, try saying “please sit on the bed” or another behavior you do want your child to engage in.

POSITIVE PARENTING STRATEGIES

- **Labeled praises** are a great way to reinforce behavior you want your child to continue to do. It also lets your child know what behaviors you like. Everyone loves hearing praise!
- **Reflecting your child's words** back to your child will allow your child to lead the interaction, allow you to help your child organize their thoughts/feelings, and increases your child's social communication. Reflections let your child know that you are listening, and they are a non-critical way of correcting your child. You can say, "I hear your upset it's bedtime, and that's okay but we are still going to put on your pajamas". In this example, you validated your child's feelings, and still provided the expectation that the bedtime routine will continue.
- **Reinforce desired behaviors** to provide your child with clear expectations. Clearly state what behaviors will be rewarded and how. For example, a stamp each time your child listens the first time a request is made. Another example may be a sticker each time your child engages in clean up and your child can work towards certain rewards (i.e. a certain number of stickers equals park time, choosing the movie for movie night, choosing the dinner meal, increase in one-on-one time, etc).

HELPING LITTLES TO COPE WITH BIG FEELINGS



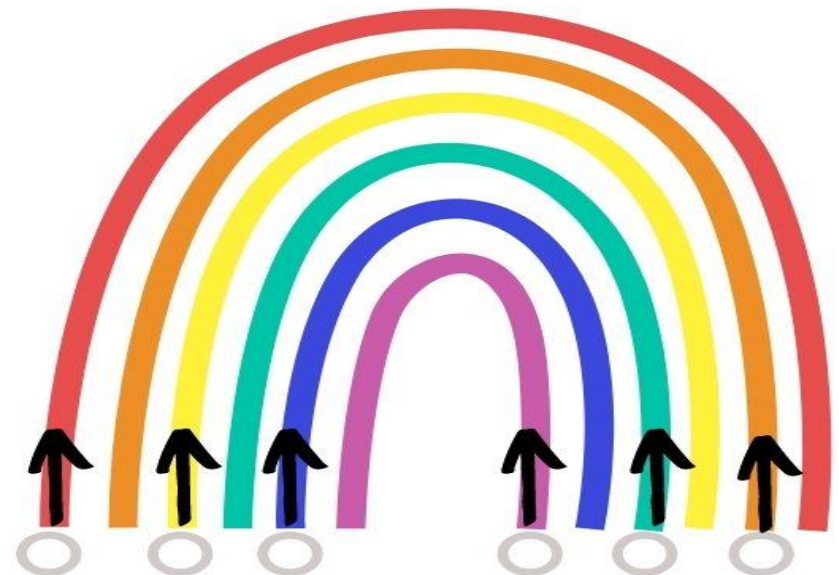
- “Name it to Tame it”
- “Engage, Don’t Enrage”
- “Move it or Lose it”
- “Let the clouds of Emotions Roll by”

CALM DOWN COPING STRATEGIES



Mindful Rainbow Exercise

Deep Breathing EXERCISE



Place your finger on a white dot. Trace the arrow and take a deep breath in. Pause at the end of the color. Trace the next arrow and breathe out. Continue around the image several times.

CALM DOWN COPING STRATEGIES

- **Mindfulness 5 senses activity:** Sit in a comfortable position. Identify 5 objects in the room ("see"), notice 4 things touching your body ("touch"), listen for 3 sounds in the room ("hear"), identify 2 smells in the room ("smell"), and identify one thing that you can taste ("taste") in that moment.
- **Hot Chocolate Breathing**
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:**
 - Making Lemonade
 - Stretching like a Cat
 - Turtle Time
- **Spaghetti noodle (Modified Progressive Muscle Relaxation):** Lay in a comfortable position. Tighten or clench and hold all the muscles in your body for 5 seconds ("uncooked spaghetti noodle"), then slowly release all the muscles or tension in your body ("cooked spaghetti noodle"). Repeat exercise 3 times.

“NEW NORMAL”

- “There’s a pull to go back to ‘normal,’ high-speed living. And yet we’re still holding- somewhere inside- the stress and grief of this last year-plus. While it’s tempting to push ahead and try to forget about what’ we’ve been through, we need to process it so that we can move forward in a healthy way, *for ourselves and our kids.*” (Wilde, 2021)

PARENTAL BURNOUT

What roles have you played in the past 1-2 years?
Doctor, parent, partner, friend, teacher,
caretaker...

“Stress in America” survey: 39% of mothers and 25% of fathers said their mental health had worsened compared with before the pandemic. Parents reported unwanted changes in weight, disrupted sleep patterns, and increased alcohol consumption- all signs that parents have been struggling to cope (APA, 2021)

It can affect any parent: perfectionist, those with limited resources, and those lacking actual support



4 DIMENSIONS OF PARENTAL BURNOUT



Physical and/or emotional exhaustion in one's parental role

Emotional distancing from children as self-preservation

Feeling fed up with or a loss of enjoyment in the parenting role

Feeling you are not the parent you want to be/used to be

REDUCING PARENTAL BURNOUT

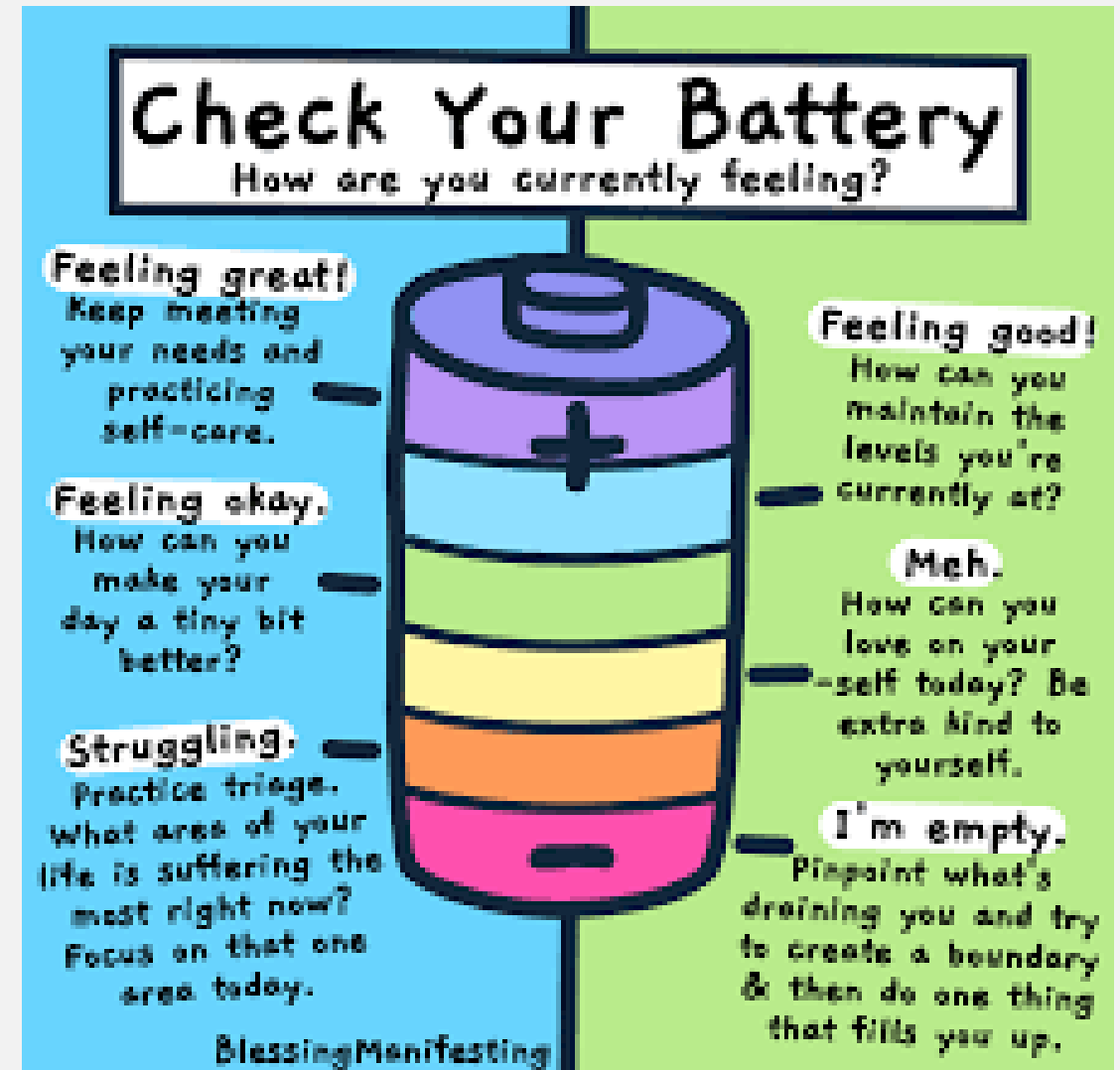
- **Start where you are (a microbreak)**
- - Mindful break: **“STOP”** method: **S**top, **T**ake a deep breath, **D**ig your feet into the ground as you tune into your five senses. **O**bserve what you’re thinking and feeling. Then decide on the “next right thing” and **P**roceed with intention
- - **“HALT”**- am I **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, **T**ired?
- - Practice a body scan
- **“You’re not doing it wrong. It’s just that hard” (Diana Spalding)**
- **Reframe what it means to practice self-care**
- **Abandon the “cult of the perfect parent”**
- **Revive the village**
- **Seek professional help if you need it**

REDUCING PARENTAL BURNOUT

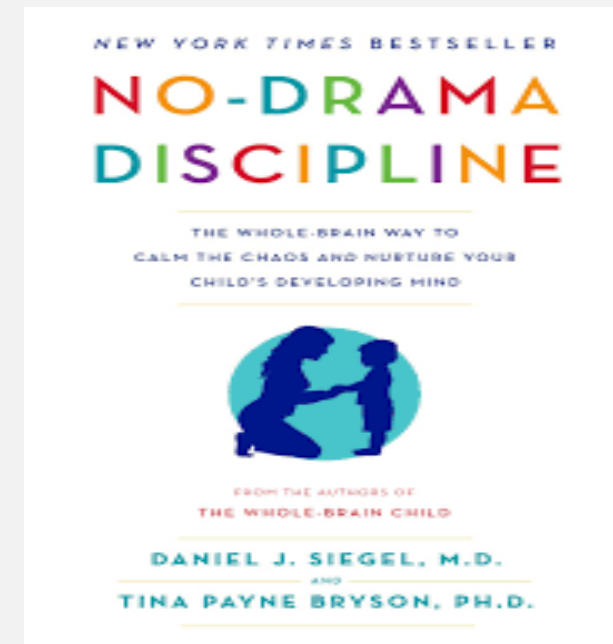
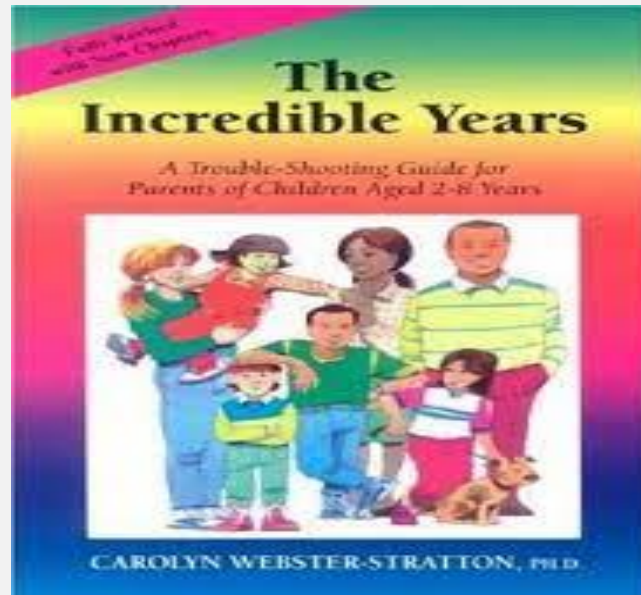
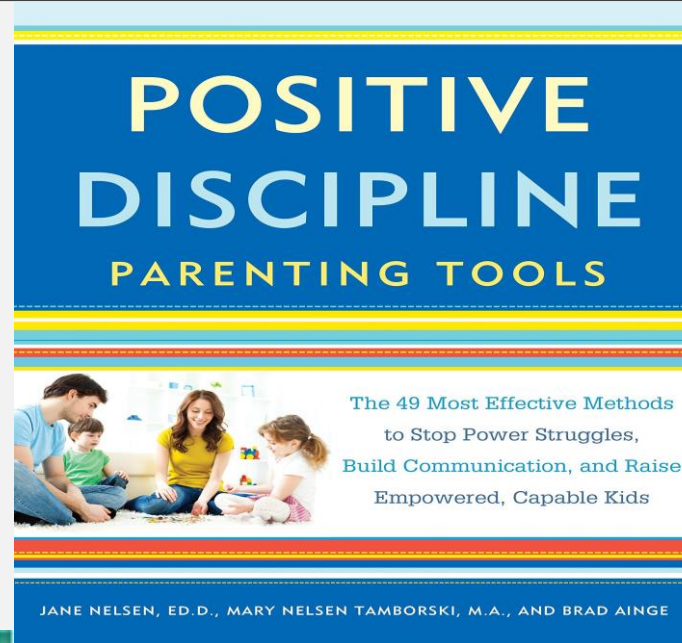
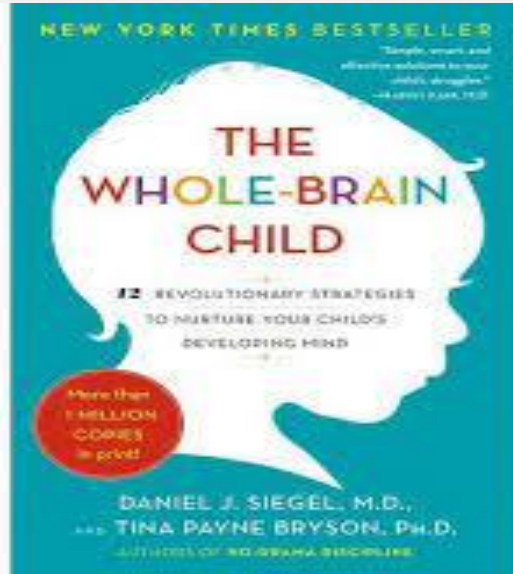
- Talk about it, break down the shame.
- Check your perspective and look for moments of genuine gratitude
- Make small changes to things within your control and create balance
- Ask for help and grow your parenting skills (books alone can increase shame)
- Reframe "shoulds" into "I want.."
- Find meaning in your memories – reconnect with your values as a parent

SELF CARE

- Parents need rest, and opportunities to refuel too!
- Engage in activities that spark joy.
- Prioritize mental health & physical wellness.
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation skills when you are able.
- Ask for help when you need it because we all need help sometimes.



RESOURCES



RESOURCES

- ❖ **Creating a Personal Plan for Managing Stress**

- ❖ https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/Reaching-Teens/Documents/Private/Personal_plan_handout.pdf

- ❖ **Mindful Breathing Activity**

- ❖ https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing?_ga=2.112820998.34239709.1590514149-1104641562.1590514149

- ❖ **How to Transform Stress into Courage and Connection**

- ❖ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_transform_stress_courage_connection

- ❖ **Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens**

- ❖ <https://centerformsc.org/msc-teens-adults/>

- ❖ **Greater Good Science Center**

- ❖ <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/education>

- ❖ **Steps to giving directions**

- ❖ <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/directions/index.html>

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QUESTIONS ?