

Managing Parental Burnout

I feel overwhelmed and drained (physically and emotionally) by the demands of my parenting role.

I struggle to find joy in my time with them.

I carry a heavy guilt for not being a "good enough" parent.

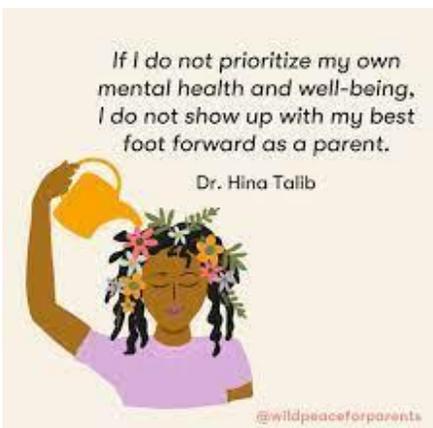
The demands of parenting are causing me to neglect my own needs.

Compared to before, I have little patience with my children.

How often have you felt the following over the past couple of months?

Parental burnout refers to a specific state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to the stressors associated with parenting.

Parenting is an ongoing journey, and raising children can significantly affect both the emotional and physical well-being of parents. During **early childhood**, parents and caregivers often encounter stress due to sleep disruptions, adjusting to new parental responsibilities, and difficulty in managing professional commitments and family obligations. As children transition into **middle childhood**, parents may encounter challenges in supervising their children's emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development, as well as managing the stressors that accompany these transitions. In **adolescence**, the stressors may increase as parents deal with their child's growing independence, risk-taking behaviors, peer influences, and concern for their child's future.



As parents, we genuinely want to do our best for our children and be 'PERFECT' parents, but this can lead to unrealistic expectations that diminish the joy of parenting and cause burnout.

Several factors can contribute to burnout: high expectations, lack of support, perfectionism, and balancing multiple roles without enough self-care. A significant cause of parental burnout is the **need to be 'PERFECT PARENTS'**. Our society places a high value on education and achievement. Parents often feel the pressure to create an ideal home environment and establish a structured routine. Additionally, there is a growing demand for co-curricular and extracurricular activities, along

with the need for tuition and exam preparation, which further burdens both children and their parents. Many parents often feel guilt or shame when they struggle with the demands of parenthood, but it's important to understand that burnout is a response to chronic stress, not a sign of failure. **Common symptoms** include

chronic fatigue, irritability, emotional detachment from one's children, and a reduced sense of accomplishment in the parenting role (Psychology Today, 2021).

Recognizing these signs of burnout is essential, as it can cause severe consequences if left unmanaged.

Here are several practical approaches to managing parental stress in a better way.

1. Prioritize Self-Care: Parents should take time for activities that revitalize them, such as their hobbies, sports, dancing, music, etc. Parents may find this difficult, but it is extremely important. Prioritizing your well-being doesn't make you a selfish or 'bad' parent, but rather helps you to effectively manage the joys and challenges of parenting. Breathing exercises, physical exercises, and other relaxation techniques help to enhance mood and decrease stress.

2. Establishing a work-life balance is essential to prevent burnout. Parents are the most important role models in a child's life. Children develop coping mechanisms, learn to schedule their work, and spend quality time with the family through observing and modeling their parents.

3. Create a Supportive Home Environment: Plan family time. This helps in strengthening the parent-child bond, regulating each other's emotions, and enhancing communication within the family. Engaging children in household tasks to promote shared responsibility and teamwork. Simplifying daily routines and decluttering spaces can contribute to a more serene environment. Setting realistic expectations (from ourselves and our children, too), encouraging children's independence, and utilizing positive reinforcement in doing so can also lighten the parental load, leading to a more balanced family dynamic.

4. Practice compassion and self-forgiveness: We may often expect ourselves to be perfect as parents and set unrealistic expectations for ourselves. This may cause undue stress. Prioritizing self-kindness can help shift your focus toward a growth mindset and enhance resilience.

5. Seek Social Support: Reaching out to friends, family, and support groups can help manage stress and burnout.

6. Seek professional help when necessary: Therapists and counselors can provide tailored strategies for managing stress and anxiety, enhancing overall well-being.

Experiencing emotional distress due to parental burnout is not a failure; it's a signal that your emotional reserves are depleted and need replenishment. Addressing the emotional toll of parenting is an act of strength, not weakness! Remember, you are not alone, and support is available.

By- Niti Parekh

Pooja Bajoria

School Counselor