

**One-Page Summaries:**

# Parental Wellbeing

**Empowered Parents Summit 2024**



Strategic  
Parenting

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# How Managing Your Own Anxiety Helps You Raise More Resilient Kids



Dr. Laura Markham

*"Children just want their parents to be kind to them, cheer them on, and love them, no matter what."*

## The ripple effect

As parents, it's tough to keep it all together sometimes. When things go south, we're quick to blame our kids for our headaches and frustrations. But we never really **stop to think** about what's causing all this tension in the first place.

You see, **children are like sponges**, soaking up everything around them, including our emotions. So, when we're feeling stressed out or anxious, they can feel it too, even if they might not understand what's going on. And if we don't tackle this on the spot, it could lead to a seriously tense family dynamic.

## Peaceful parenting

Think of parenting as a **dance of empathy and boundaries**. Instead of just reacting to your kids' behaviour, pause and try to understand where they're coming from. Are they tired? Overwhelmed? By tuning into their needs, you can set limits with love and guide them while honouring their dignity.

This approach isn't just about the kids—it's about us, too. This is how we prioritise our own well-being, knowing that **our calm energy sets the tone** for the whole family. You see, peaceful parenting is, in fact, not just one method; it's a whole lifestyle.

## Tips for staying calm

If you're constantly worried about your child, that anxiety will seep into your interactions with them. You might find yourself getting into unnecessary power struggles or becoming overly controlling, and that's not good for anyone.

First off, **it's essential to take care of yourself**. After you've covered the basics like feeding, clothing, and keeping your kids safe and well-rested, your number one responsibility is your own inner balance and well-being.

When you get all worked up, take a moment to calm down. Remind yourself that everything's going to be okay. Repeat a little mantra to yourself, like "*We'll figure this out*" or "*I've got this*."

But perhaps the most important thing you can do for yourself is to **practice self-compassion**. Treat yourself with kindness and understanding, just like you would a good friend who's going through a tough time.



# How to Parent From the Same Page and Share the Load Fairly

Dr. Rick Hanson



*"In parenting, it's not about who's right or wrong, but about finding solutions that benefit the entire family."*

## Building unity

When you become a parent, suddenly, every decision seems to carry so much weight. From how to discipline your child to setting limits on screen time, these discussions can get pretty intense. And what complicates matters even more is that each partner brings their own upbringing and experiences into the mix.

If left unaddressed, these differences can really strain your relationship. Simple things like arguing over bedtime routines or discipline methods can create a lot of tension between partners. That makes it even more crucial to find a way to overcome these differences and **work together as a team**.

## Tracking time

The research shows a stark reality: in many families, the load isn't equally shared. On average, moms work about 20 hours more per week than their partners. And let's not forget the executive load—worrying, planning, and sharing responsibilities.

There's a 5-minute exercise that you can use to reveal the inequities and open the door for discussion. It's called '**tracking the time**'. Both of you will jot down your activities in 15-minute intervals for a week. Create a simple spreadsheet with categories like sleep, meals, chores, work, and so on. At the end of the week, add up the time independently and compare notes.

## Getting stuff done together

First things first, sit down with your partner and talk about who's doing what around the house, how you're handling the kids, and even how you're going to talk to each other. This clarity can save you a ton of headaches down the road.

Next up, when things get tough, don't be afraid to lay it all out there. Speak from the heart, express how you're feeling, and really try to understand where your partner is coming from.

And lastly, sometimes you just have to **give a little to get a little**. If your partner wants something, see if you can make it happen – within reason, of course. This will bring you one step closer to that middle ground.



# Kids Have a Knack for Pushing Our Buttons, and That's a Good Thing

Susan Stiffelman



*"It's important to understand that the root of many challenges with our children often lies in how we interact with them."*

## Rewriting the script

Our own childhood experiences and attachment styles tend to sneak into how we raise our own kids. For example, if we're the type who tends to avoid getting too close or emotional, we might find ourselves pulling away from our kids when they need us most. Or, if we're seeking constant reassurance and validation, we might smother our kids with our own neediness.

However, it's important to shake up these old patterns with a bit of **awareness and effort**. That way, we'll get to understand why we react the way we do and what we can do to rewire our parenting style gradually.

## Three roles parents take

I often talk about three roles when it comes to parenting.

First up, we've got what I like to call the "**captain of the ship**." You're the leader here, making decisions for the well-being of your crew (aka the kids). As the captain, you get to set the boundaries and guide them safely.

Then, we've got what I call the "**two lawyers**." This is when things start getting a bit argumentative. Your child wants something, you want something else, and suddenly, it's like you're both presenting your cases in a courtroom drama.

Last but not least, we've got the "**dictator mode**." It's when you're feeling frustrated, and you start laying down the law with threats, bribes, or maybe even a bit of emotional withdrawal. Even though ruling with an iron fist might get short-term results, this will only drive your kid away from you.

## The first step

It all begins with **awareness**. We need to tune into that inner observer, especially when we're feeling stressed. When you notice you're reaching your limit, take a moment. Maybe it's stepping away for a few minutes or simply saying, "*This is tough*." Remember, it's okay to admit when parenting feels hard. It's all part of the journey towards becoming a better parent.



# Discover How Mindfulness Can Combat Stress - A Secret Weapon You Never Knew You Needed

Dr. Christopher Willard



*"If you can stay calm and compassionate while that child is really struggling, that's the best possible thing you can offer them."*

## Stress is normal

Lots of parents have this notion that being mindful means they should never, ever get stressed. But that's just not the case. It's actually about being able to choose the way you're going to respond to a stressful situation (instead of letting your anger get the best of you).

Take, for example, the guy who cuts us off in traffic. Total jerk, right? But practising **mindfulness** can completely change how you react. Sure, you'll still feel that initial surge of anger, but rather than letting it snowball, you'll activate your logical brain, *"Hey, maybe there's a reason they're in such a hurry."*

## Body-mind reset

Breathing is the ultimate reset button for your body and mind. With older kids, I like to explain it as hitting that reset button at the bottom of our lungs. So, when you take those slow, deep breaths, you're calming your body down, which then calms your mind.

For the little ones, I like to turn breathing into a fun game. They love pretending to be butterflies, using their imagination, or blowing on imaginary hot chocolate to cool it down. This is a great start. As children grow, the techniques will naturally evolve from **playful breath exercises** to more structured practices like, for example, alternate nostril breathing.

## Compassionate presence

When your child is struggling with anxiety or frustration, what they need most from you isn't a quick fix or a prescribed mindfulness exercise. They don't need to be told to *Take a deep breath* or *Calm down.*

What I've found through my years of practice and research is that the most impactful thing we can do is regulate our own state first. What truly makes the difference is how your child handles stress is: **your own ability to stay centred** and calm. That way, you get to lead the way for them.

# Nipping Burnout in the Bud: Effective Solutions for a 100% Parenting Comeback!

Dr. Shoshana Bennett



*"It's a misconception that children must always be the number one priority; teaching them boundaries is a more profound form of love."*

## Recognising signs

When parents find themselves **short-tempered**, they usually start blaming everything around them. And their "ropes," so to speak, become very short. It doesn't take a whole lot before they snap.

Often, there's a lot of guilt that comes along with that. It's like, "Oh, my two-year-old was just doing a two-year-old thing, and I snapped at her, and I know she didn't deserve it, and I feel terrible." That's often a sign that we really need to do a better job of caring for ourselves and building up our energy.

## Me-time matters

First off, carve out time for yourself, even amidst the chaos of parenting. I get it; it's not always easy, especially with little ones running around. But even just 20 minutes where the kids can entertain themselves while you and your partner catch up on your day can make a world of difference.

Think about **actionable steps** you can take to ensure you're not running on empty. So, pick two or three times a week to dedicate some time to yourself. Whether it's a quick walk around the block, a bubble bath, or just some uninterrupted reading time, make it a recurring event that you can count on.

## Saying yes to self-care

When it comes to preventing burnout, you want to find a balance between caring for your children and taking care of yourself. Start by teaching boundaries to your children. You want to show them that everyone's needs, including yours, are valuable. So, don't hesitate to set aside time for yourself, even if it means the kids need to wait a bit.

Also, **communicate openly** with your children about why self-care is important. Let them know that taking care of yourself isn't selfish; it's necessary for staying healthy and happy. By modelling this behaviour, you're teaching them valuable lessons that will serve them well throughout their lives.



# Transform Parental Blame Patterns and Thrive Against All Odds

Dr. Fleet Maul



*"Taking radical responsibility isn't about pointing fingers or blaming anyone, not even ourselves. It's about recognising that we have control over our own actions and decisions."*

## Modelling responsibility

It's so common for us to fall into this trap of blaming and shaming ourselves or others when things don't go the way we hoped. It's almost as if it's ingrained in us as a part of our culture (no matter where we come from). But the thing is, when we start pointing fingers, we're basically giving away our power.

As parents, it's crucial for us to **break free from this pattern**. We need to take responsibility for the situations we find ourselves in. And it's especially important to model this behaviour for our kids. They learn from watching us, so showing them how to take ownership is a really valuable lesson.

## Responding mindfully

Taking responsibility means understanding that we are influenced by how we were raised and the things we learned when we were kids. Think of our minds as computers running programs from childhood.

Now, we have different parts of ourselves. There's the **adult part**, which helps us think clearly about what's happening now. Then, there's the **child part**, which can be playful or throw tantrums based on how we learned to cope as kids.

So, the key is to catch ourselves when we're reacting and try to respond calmly instead. It takes practice, but by staying present and aware, we can break free from old habits and take charge of our actions.

## Owning your feelings

Keep an eye out for when you find yourself stuck in what we call the 'Drama Triangle', where blame, victimhood, and rescuing take centre stage. Shift your mindset from feeling like a victim to feeling empowered and from blaming others to offering support without trying to fix everything.

Next, instead of pointing fingers, try using "I" statements to express how you feel and figure out what's really bugging you. Ask yourself whether your perceptions of the situation are spot-on, and consider different ways to handle things without automatically blaming others. That way, you can keep the conversation constructive and **move forward positively**.

# Parental Exhaustion: How to Beat Burnout Before It Beats You

Sally Arnold



*"Parents need to understand that self-care is crucial for parental well-being and that resting is not a luxury but a necessity."*

## The silent burnout

We live in a world where if you're a parent and you're a working parent, you're expected to work as if you don't have a family. And you're expected to have a family and keep up with household things as if you didn't work. That's a formula for burnout, and that's how it affects everybody.

Usually, parents don't even notice they've burnt out. Not even when they start showing more extremes (having some wine occasionally vs. having wine at 10 am on a Tuesday). It's really important to **ask for support** because if we don't, our kids will suffer the most.

## From tired to torn

Parental burnout has three components.

**First off, there's 1) overwhelming exhaustion.** Now, if you've been a parent for more than a week, you know that's a reality for everybody, everywhere. Whether it's physical exhaustion from dealing with a newborn or emotional exhaustion from worrying, it's all draining.

**The next component is 2) distancing yourself from your children.** It's normal not to like your kids all the time, but when you find yourself needing a break just to preserve your energy, that's a red flag.

**Finally, there's 3) a complete loss of fulfilment.** You still love your children, but you just can't stand being around them. Sadly, these symptoms are common, but recognising them is the first step towards a solution.

## Reclaiming pleasure

When it comes to beating parental burnout, the first thing I want to emphasise is that you're not alone in this. That's why it's important to create a judgement-free space where you can talk about these things openly.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help. Whether it's from your partner, friends, or even a professional, reaching out for support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

If you don't know where to start, **start small.** Take just a few minutes each day for yourself, whether it's to relax, meditate, or just breathe. Trust me, those little moments of self-care can make a world of difference.





# The Unexpected Ways Motherhood Is Changing You and How to Own It

Dr. Sarah McKay



*"When you're a new mom, it's really hard. You've got to call on the cavalry because if we can protect sleep, we can protect mental health, emotional stability, and physical health."*

## Challenging stereotypes

There's this tendency to brush off anything about women's brains as just being about emotions running wild or not being reliable thinkers. And if you really think about it, the stereotype that's out there about what **a woman's brain** is like is pretty much seen as pink and fluffy.

However, the research shows that moms, particularly those who've had up to four kids, tend to have brains that seem younger than those with fewer or no kids. It's *not* just about the hormones, though. Having kids means you're always on your toes, adapting and learning as they grow.

## The health dream team

Good sleep is basically the bedrock of keeping your brain in tip-top shape. I'm personally a big fan, especially of those strategic afternoon naps. They just make you love sleep even more, which helps you knock out better at night.

Then, surround yourself with **strong support**. The more you're backed up by a strong support circle, the healthier and happier you tend to be. Essentially, it's all connected—if you're healthy, you're likely to be happier because your physical health is inseparably linked to your mental health.

## Calm on your terms

Find your moment or place of calm. I'm not a huge fan of pushing mindfulness and meditation because, let's be real, it's helpful for some people some of the time, but it's not a one-size-fits-all solution. What's crucial is figuring out how you can find a bit of peace amid the chaos.

For me, it's all about the sea. Whether I'm swimming in the ocean during winter, sailing, surfing, or just gazing at the sea, I feel incredibly fortunate to have that view. Saltwater is my go-to remedy. I don't stick to specific breathing techniques to relax; it's more about discovering **what clicks for you**, something you can rely on to chill out.

# How I Conquered My Temper to Become the Mom My Kids Always Wanted

Hunter Clarke-Fields



*"Kids don't need a busy schedule; they need you. Secure attachment comes from your security, peace, and ease. Take care of yourself, for that is the foundation for effective parenting."*

## Expectations vs. reality

Feeling like a failure as a parent is something no one prepares you for. Despite your best efforts to be patient and understanding, there are times when you will fall short.

I think many parents can relate to this internal struggle. We all have this vision of the perfect parent we want to be, but the reality of parenting often falls short of that ideal. It's a journey of constant self-awareness and growth, learning from our mistakes, and striving to **do better next time**.

## Hit the pause button

Here's something important to keep in mind: kids aren't trying to manipulate us when they act out. They're just trying to meet their needs in the best way they know how. As parents, we have the power to set the tone of our relationship with them. So, by approaching challenges with empathy and understanding, we can **strengthen our bond** with our children.

As parents, it's tough not to react when things get challenging. However, we can still learn to respond thoughtfully. Before you feel the urge to react impulsively, try simple mindfulness practices like taking deep breaths **during calm moments** or doing a quick three-breath hug with your kid.

## Keep your cool

Next time you feel the anger bubbling up, practise **pausing**. Create a moment of space between the trigger and your response. This can be as simple as taking a few deep breaths or **stepping away from the situation** for a moment to cool down.

Another helpful strategy is to **verbalise your feelings**. Instead of suppressing your anger, you can acknowledge it out loud in a calm and controlled manner. For example, saying something like, *"I'm feeling really frustrated right now,"* can help most parents process their emotions without lashing out.



# The Truth About Brain Health: Debunking Myths for You and Your Child

Dr. Austin Perlmutter



*"The most important thing for parents is to understand that protecting their child's brain health should be their number one objective in life."*

## Prioritise your brain

We've kind of lost track of this big picture. We're all chasing stuff things that, more often than not, aren't doing our brains any favours. And it shows—just look at the rising rates of depression and anxiety worldwide.

Everything—how we think, feel, get along with others, and enjoy life—hinges on our **brain health**. And this isn't just a 'sometimes' thing; it's for everyone, at every age. That's why kids and parents should make this a priority.

## One step at a time

When life gets busy, it's easy to forget about healthy habits. But remember, we're **not aiming for perfection** here. Just focus on taking practical steps day by day to improve the brain health of your whole family.

First up, sleep. **Prioritising sleep** is crucial. Skipping even just one night can mess with your decision-making, mood, and overall well-being. So, aim for 7 to 9 hours of shut-eye each night, and keep those screens out of the bedroom.

Blue light from devices messes with our sleep hormone, melatonin, making it harder to drift off. Also, try keeping the room a bit cooler and avoid caffeine after noon. It's a game-changer for **sleep quality**.

## Expanding the mind

As parents, you're already flexing your brain muscles by navigating the challenges of parenting. But there's more you can do with your kids. For example, exploring nature is not only engaging but also a fantastic way to reduce stress.

Travelling is another excellent brain workout—it pushes you out of your comfort zone in a positive way. Activities like public speaking or performing on stage are also great ways to embrace a little **healthy stress** and expand your mind.

The key takeaway here is to **stay curious and keep learning**. With so much time spent on screens these days, it's important to break out of that cycle. Simple things like spending **30 minutes outside** can have a profound impact on your brain health.



# How to Heal Your Inner Child by Being the Parent You Needed

Emilie Delworth



*"Emotional triggers are opportunities to connect with our inner child and address unresolved wounds."*

## Growing up

Everyone carries some level of inner child wounds. It's just a part of being human. Some of us may have experienced more profound or ongoing **traumas in childhood**, which can impact us significantly as adults, especially when we become parents ourselves.

But even if we had loving and supportive parents, no one's upbringing is flawless. There are always little moments where our needs weren't fully met. So, even those who say they had a great childhood can still struggle because, well, **our parents are only human, and they're not perfect.**

## Managing emotions

As children, we're naturally in tune with our bodies - our emotions, instincts, everything. But as we grow up, we somehow lose that connection. We learn to suppress our emotions, to stifle our cries, and that disconnect grows.

So, **the key is to get back in touch with our bodies.** Through movement, through inner child work, we start to reconnect. By tuning into the sensations in our bodies, we can catch ourselves before emotions escalate.

Of course, there are times when it's tough, like in crowded places. But in those moments, we need to give ourselves and our kids some grace. It's not about what others think. It's about **being there for our kids** and reassuring them, whether it's in the store or stepping outside for a breather.

## Keeping it real

I'm a big believer in **using movement and play to regulate emotions.** Just goofing around with your little ones can make a huge difference, trust me.

Forget about being perfect. We're all human. Imperfection is part of the journey, and that's totally okay. Focus on creating a **safe, loving environment** for our families where you will empower our kids and also have some fun.

# Dad Talk: What Coaching Hundreds of Men Taught Me About Parenting

Ed Gough Jr.



*"Mistakes are fleeting moments, not defining characteristics."*

## Navigating doubts

A lot of times, dads don't want to admit they're struggling. Some feel it's a sign of weakness. They think they've got to be strong all the time because they're men. But every dad, every man and every person has their *Kryptonite*.

"Are we doing enough as dads?" It's a question that keeps popping up, especially after the pandemic. That's because things have drastically changed overnight—dads were suddenly at home like never before.

But we shouldn't **stress over perfection**. We're all just doing our best. We should focus on being there for our kids, creating a loving environment, and having some fun along the way. Because that's what really matters in fatherhood.

## Dads matter

Encouraging dads to share their stories is crucial. Many are so caught up in daily tasks that they overlook their own experiences. Every dad is a super dad, but they often don't hear it enough.

Taking the time to listen and **acknowledge their efforts** can make a big difference. Parenting isn't easy, especially with societal expectations and personal histories shaping our views. Providing support and simply lending an ear can go a long way in helping fathers navigate their journey.

## Three steps to success

While working with hundreds of dads, I've noticed a pattern. When things go wrong, they follow a **three-step process** to get to the root of the problem. They ask themselves: 1) What happened? 2) Why did it happen? and 3) What's the next best thing to do? They apply this approach not only to parenting but also to various other aspects of life.

The next best thing to do is always to spend quality time with your kids (especially if you have a busy schedule). Despite getting home late, you can still carve out **15 minutes for your child** every day. For example, when you arrive home at night, you can take your kid out for a short drive. It's a simple yet meaningful way to connect and bond with your child.

# Fix Your Parent-Child Relationship With the AEQ Method

Blaz Jurecic



*“True family connection goes beyond just watching the clock; it’s about being fully present and engaged in meaningful interactions.”*

## Together but apart

Stress has a profound impact on our lives. Take sleep, for example. We can feel sleepy but still wake up in the middle of the night because of the stress. And it's not just sleep – stress also messes with our emotions, making us swing from one mood to another.

It makes us feel overwhelmed by problems. Everything seems bigger than it actually is. And it doesn't stop there—**stress can change how we behave**, too. When we're low on energy, we might start pulling away from social activities.

This means spending less time talking and sharing with the family. What we end up seeing is families sitting in the same room but scrolling on their phones instead of **spending quality time together**. This is not only an unhealthy practice, but it also sets the wrong example for the kids.

## Facing reality

It's easy to think that being smart or knowledgeable is enough to solve your problems. But the truth is, unless you confront your feelings and tackle the root issues, change is hard to come by. It's tough, no doubt about it.

See, nowadays, everyone's chasing pleasure, right? But before you can get there, you've got to deal with reality head-on. That means **facing the uncomfortable**. I always say **the solution isn't to go around the pain**; you've got to go through it and dive into the problem itself.

## Deeper connections

When we're stressed, our muscles tend to tense up without us even realizing it. It's like our bodies forget how to relax. But with AEQ exercises, you're consciously working on **relaxing those muscles** again. You can't just rely on external factors to fix this. It's something you have to do for yourself.

And when you're more relaxed physically, it shows in your nonverbal communication – your posture, your facial expressions, even your tone of voice. And that can have a **big impact on how you connect with your kids**.