

# Nourishing the Caregiver: The Importance of Self-Care

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## Keys to Remember When Raising Youth with an FASD

- ▶ Always ask what is causing a behavior before responding to it
  - The cause tells us how we need to respond
- ▶ Think about what age the behavior that you are seeing feels like
  - Instead of getting angry at the behavior, we can then understand it and respond differently
- ▶ Recognize issues of loss and grieving



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### Why Think About Loss and Grieving

- ▶ We often only think about loss and grief in terms of death
- ▶ All individuals with an FASD have experienced multiple losses
  - They are not like their peers as they get older
- ▶ All families experience multiple losses
- ▶ Sometimes, behaviors that we see are reflections of issues around loss
  - If we don't recognize that, we may not respond in a helpful way



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*If we do not in some way mourn our losses, we end up living in the past, regretting the present, and fearing the future.*

• Elizabeth Kübler-Ross



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### Physical Manifestations of Grief

Adapted From Pickett (1993)

- ▶ Hollowness in the stomach
- ▶ Tightness in the chest and throat
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Oversensitivity to noise
- ▶ Muscle weakness
- ▶ Lack of energy
- ▶ Dry mouth
- ▶ Hallucinations
- ▶ Mask-like face



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### Behaviors Associated With Grief

Adapted From Pickett (1993)

- ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Appetite disturbances
- ▶ Absent-minded behavior
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Distressing dreams
- ▶ Sighing
- ▶ Restlessness
- ▶ Crying
- ▶ Anger outbursts
- ▶ Mood swings



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### Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Hopes and dreams
- ▶ Self-esteem and competence
- ▶ Balanced family system
- ▶ Peer relationships
- ▶ Intimate relationships
- ▶ Support from others



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### Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Their family (through separations)
- ▶ Consistent caregivers
- ▶ Vocational/educational opportunities
- ▶ A role in the family and in society
- ▶ Joy and pleasure



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### Losses Experienced by Persons With FASD or Other Disabilities

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Potential/talents
- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ The ability to be like everyone else
- ▶ Freedom
- ▶ Security about the future
- ▶ Control



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### Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Hopes and dreams
- ▶ Self-esteem and competence
- ▶ Balanced family system
- ▶ Support from family, friends, community



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### Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ Their loved one (placement, suicide, leaving the family)
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Financial security
- ▶ Privacy



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## Losses Experienced by Families

Dubovsky (1996)

- ▶ Freedom
- ▶ Social network
- ▶ The ability to “kvell”
- ▶ Security about the future
- ▶ Control



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## Blame Checklist

Dubovsky (1998)

- ▶ Check off all those whom you can blame for the problems you encounter:
  - Yourself -----
  - Your significant other -----
  - Genetics -----
  - “The system” -----
  - Infomercials -----
  - Aliens -----
  - The line-up of the planets -----
  - A superior being -----



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## Keys to Remember When Raising Youth with an FASD

- ▶ We can’t be fair if we treat everyone the same
- ▶ Identify positives in those for whom you are caring
- ▶ Think about their strengths and abilities
  - It helps to write them down
- ▶ When things go poorly, remember what has gone right
- ▶ Find something to smile about every day



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## A Strengths Based Approach to Improving Outcomes

- ▶ Identify strengths and desires in the individual
  - What do they do well?
  - What do they like to do?
  - What are their best qualities?
  - What are your funniest experiences with them?
- ▶ Identify strengths in the family
- ▶ Identify strengths in the providers
- ▶ Identify strengths in the community
  - Include cultural strengths in the community

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### Bill's Strengths

- ▶ Friendly
  - ▶ Likeable
  - ▶ Verbal
  - ▶ Helpful
  - ▶ Endearing
  - ▶ Caring
  - ▶ Animal lover
  - ▶ Funny
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- ▶ A good heart
  - ▶ Determined
  - ▶ Points of insight
  - ▶ Good with younger children
  - ▶ Willing to try new things
  - ▶ Not malicious
  - ▶ Public Speaking
  - ▶ Every day is a new day

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### Person First Language

- ▶ "My child has bipolar disorder" not "he's bipolar"
- ▶ "She has an oppositional disorder" rather than "She's oppositional"
- ▶ "The youth in foster care" not "the foster child"
- ▶ "A woman with a substance use disorder" rather than "a substance abusing woman"
- ▶ "A child with autism" not "the autistic child"
- ▶ "He has FASD" not "he is FASD"

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### Taking Care of Yourself

- ▶ Acknowledge frustrations
- ▶ Learn to walk the fine line between assertiveness and aggressiveness
- ▶ Find an advocate to support you at meetings
- ▶ Identify someone you can vent to
  - We all need to be able to vent our frustrations to someone who will listen
  - Solving problems is not necessarily the goal



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### Taking Care of Yourself

- ▶ Take time for yourself
  - Even brief periods of time each day to do something you enjoy
- ▶ Get a hobby that results in something you can complete
  - So you can see the results of your efforts
- ▶ Find a way to reduce or compartmentalize your stressors



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### Stress Management



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## The Importance of Acknowledging and Dealing with Stress

- ▶ We all experience stress in our lives
  - We may experience stress in our work life, our home life, our personal life
- ▶ We all handle stress differently
- ▶ Stress affects our physical and emotional health
- ▶ We often dismiss the stress we experience
- ▶ If we don't find a way to manage stress, it continues to build
  - If we ignore it, it does not go away
- ▶ Stress causes the release of cortisol
  - A little is good; a lot is not



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## Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ The cost of caring
- ▶ Physical, emotional, and/or spiritual fatigue that takes over a person
- ▶ Causes a decline in the ability to experience joy and care for oneself or others
- ▶ If stress is not addressed, it builds and interferes with day to day functioning
- ▶ Experienced by human service personnel as well as families



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## The Worry Grid

- ▶ The purpose of the worry grid is to get a handle on addressing stress in your life
- ▶ There are several steps in the process
  - Identify your worries
  - Construct a grid
  - Identify what you can and cannot address
  - Develop steps to address that which you can control



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## Ten Steps Towards Managing Stress

(Eshelman et al 1988)

- ▶ Identify symptoms of stress
- ▶ Identify sources of stress
- ▶ Identify how you respond to your particular stressors
- ▶ Set goals to respond more effectively
- ▶ Motivate yourself



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## Ten Steps Towards Managing Stress

(Eshelman et al 1988)

- ▶ Change your thinking
- ▶ Deal with others
- ▶ When in conflict, negotiate
- ▶ Pace and balance yourself
- ▶ Know when to quit



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## Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Clearly describe the situation that is causing stress
- ▶ Be aware of how you currently handle stress
  - Set a task to "observe yourself" and how you react
- ▶ Brainstorm alternative responses at times that are not stressful
  - Write down the alternatives
- ▶ Set realistic goals for yourself
  - Not "change all my reactions in every situation now"



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### Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Make effective use of your time
  - Write a **realistic** “to do” list
  - Set priorities
  - Check off items accomplished
- ▶ Find something to “finish”
- ▶ Eat correctly
- ▶ Get enough sleep



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### Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Exercise regularly
- ▶ Practice deep breathing
- ▶ Do what relaxes you
  - Listen to music
  - Take a hot bath
  - Get a massage
  - Read
- ▶ Learn progressive relaxation techniques
- ▶ Leave work at work



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### Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Take time for yourself
  - Take an hour or a day for yourself
  - Take regular vacations
  - Use sick time when sick
- ▶ Find a way to have fun
  - At home
  - At work
- ▶ Do something that results in a concrete product
  - Art; craft; writing
  - You may have to find something that can be completed in a short period of time



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### Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Identify strengths in yourself and those around you
  - Write down each person's strengths
  - Review them regularly
  - Add to the lists
- ▶ Give yourself credit for what you do accomplish and have accomplished in the past
- ▶ Don't take on inappropriate guilt
  - Try not to take on the "superperson" or "rescue" syndrome
- ▶ Recognize there is a balance of "success" and "failure"
- ▶ Forgive others and yourself

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### Tips for Managing Stress

- ▶ Have faith in yourself and others
- ▶ Keep in touch with your spirit
- ▶ Love and appreciate yourself
- ▶ Take care of yourself
- ▶ Keep a sense of humor
- ▶ RELAX!!

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