



I'm struggling due to my child's mental health. I'm exhausted, I'm isolated and I don't know how long I can carry on.

We understand. It's tough to see your child's mental health decline. And it's not just dealing with the practical things - coping with the emotions it brings up is challenging. Your head and heart hurt constantly and you just want to fix it all, but you can't. It's normal to lose sight of future plans and to find yourself sitting in a mindset where you can't believe in any kind of future, for you or them. It's also normal to lose hope and think that things will never change. It's normal to blame yourself and feel guilty. It's normal to feel pressure from other people's expectations or judgements. It's normal to feel exhausted from trying to come to terms with the fact our child isn't doing what other people's children are doing. You're not alone. We get it.

But while these feelings and responses are normal, they are not helpful to either of you. It's important to challenge your thoughts and try to nurture a sense of belief. Keeping a sense of hope and optimism (however unrealistic you feel it is at the beginning) will help you to cope, which will in term help your child.

SO HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

What you're going through is heavy. Do you recognise the emotional load you're carrying? And how do you share that load?

- ✔ Do you have support from a partner, family member, friend, colleague or therapist?
- ✔ Spend more time with people who are supportive and give you energy rather than those who leave you feeling more drained.
- ✔ Work out who can be your go-to person - and if you don't have anyone, join a community like PMH and surround yourself with likeminded people going through similar experiences. We are always listening.
- ✔ Assert your boundaries - you have finite energy and what you have left after helping your child is precious so don't share it with those who drain you.



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RECOGNISE YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AND TAKE ACTION TO HELP DECREASE THE LEVELS OF ANXIETY IN YOUR LIFE.

- ✔ Simplify your life - remove unnecessary obligations, decide what your basic needs are above shelter and food...and meet those first. Recognise that you are worthy of the love and care you give others.
- ✔ Speak to your doctor if things feel overwhelming.
- ✔ Speak to a counsellor. When we're in the middle of something, talking to someone who is outside of the conflict circle can give us the clarity we can often lack when we're in the thick of it.
- ✔ Getting therapy for yourself doesn't mean you're a bad parent or person or that there's something wrong with you. It means you're taking

care of yourself and your family. It's a positive, powerful thing to do. Sometimes we need someone who isn't involved to talk things through with us to make sense of things. If your child isn't ready for support, it doesn't mean you don't have to be. You are the blueprint for them, so it could be the start of them considering it too?

- ✔ Remember your child and their mental health is not a reflection of you as a person or a parent - it is their experience - one you can absolutely support and influence - but you don't have to join them in their mental illness.

Allow yourself to grieve the loss of the life you thought you and your child were going to have.

Life after mental illness doesn't have to be worse - it can be an opportunity to take a new path, try new things and become exactly who you are. But holding onto the life you expected to have hinders you

ability to embrace the new, move towards a bright, brilliant future or grow together. Allow yourself to feel the feelings of loss - and if you need support to move through these, contact a professional for support.

Even though things are difficult, you still have control. Recognising the things you can control can give you a sense of peace.



You can control:

- ✓ Your response.
- ✓ How much you worry.
- ✓ How much you take on for others.
- ✓ How you nurture and care for yourself.
- ✓ How you spend your personal time, when you have some.

- ✓ You have a choice to take care of yourself and give yourself nurture and support - your child's mental health challenges don't need to stop you from being compassionate to yourself. Offer yourself as much care and kindness as you offer your child. You're going through this too.
- ✓ You can choose to stop being the fixer - and see that this situation isn't one that you can fix.

LOOK FOR PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF:

Create a nurture corner or self soothe box.

Take care of your own mental health

- find activities that help you to self soothe and ways to release trapped emotions such as walking, running, journalling or art and crafts.

Plan a weekly treat for yourself.

Whether that's an hour in the car, bath or in front of the TV, draw a line around it and claim that as your time.

Micro self care is a good way to begin to nurture yourself and you can start it today. Spend 10 minutes every day doing something that makes

you feel better - it might be reading a favourite book, rubbing hand cream in and relaxing with a face mask, lying in bed, daydreaming (positively) or planning a trip if money was no object.

How do you start the day and end the day?

Rituals are great ways to calm, connect and ground us.

Consider a morning ritual - add in some meditation, time reading or watching a funny video, or time drinking your morning tea in peace. Look out of the window and notice what is going on in the worlds. How is nature changing? It's a reminder that nothing stays the same. Gratitude is a powerful tool in changing how we see the world - finding 3 things you're grateful for every day for 21 days changes the neural pathways so you begin to seek out the positives. It doesn't



change the things in your life, but it does change how you see them.

Be your own best friend.

Focus on the things you're doing well. Focus on what you can control and what you can do to help. Remind yourself you're doing the best you can. Do everything you do usually with more kindness and self love.

Consider the triggers

Maybe it's birthdays, exam results days, or days when we are reminded of what you've had to let go of. Maybe it's not about your family - but seeing other people's move on. Maybe it's the anniversary of an achievement that feels out of reach now. It's ok. Be gentle with yourself as the day approaches. Your child's time will come. Prepare for these

days - plan alternative activities, stay off social media and reach out to your support network for extra hugs and understanding. Most of all, allow yourself to feel these feelings. It's ok to feel sad or angry or frustrated

Remember this will pass. It won't last forever. Take some deep breaths and trust that things are changing, even if it's sometimes hard to see them.

Take the pressure off yourself and your child.

It's ok to just survive. You don't need to be winning awards or climbing mountains. Your child doesn't need to be top of everything. Survival is a worthy pursuit. You don't always have to strive, your time to thrive will come. For now, do what you need to do to feel peace, calm, and safety.



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