

RECOGNIZING & MANAGING PARENTAL ANXIETY

Children are often barometers of other things going on in a family. If your child's behavior or "feeling state" changes, consider what may be influencing her, including yourself. As a parent, taking care of yourself is often one of the most important things you can do for your child.

It's also important to recognize that everyone has their own feelings about things. Feelings don't have to, and often don't, match between parent and child.

HOW CAN PARENTS RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN EMOTIONS?

- Notice any tension in your body (muscles, body movements).
- How does your voice sound?
- Have your sleeping or eating patterns changed?
- Are you less able to concentrate?
- Do you feel irritable or angry a lot of the time?
- Do you find yourself parenting differently (harsher words, more physical, louder voice, withdrawing)?

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO MANAGE THEIR EXPERIENCES?

- **Notice your thoughts.** If you find yourself anticipating something, (Joe will cry when I leave him), change your mindset to a calmer more neutral one, (Joe may be sad when I leave, but he will be okay).
- **Provide daily self-care.** Find at least five to 15 minutes every day for self-care. Take time in the shower, bathroom or a quiet space. Tag team with another caregiver or do it while your child is sleeping. Find what fills you up and do it.
- **Take deep breaths** throughout the day.
- **Think calming thoughts.** "I can do this." "It will work out." "They will be okay." "I will be okay." "I can handle it." "One thing at a time."
- **Let go!** Decline an activity or cancel one sometimes. Let the laundry remain in the basket. Let the dishes sit in the sink. Vacuum another day.
- **Ensure you have social time.** Individually and as a couple, if applicable.
- **Talk to a support person.** Have people to call and "vent" to -- a friend, spiritual leader or therapist, if needed.