

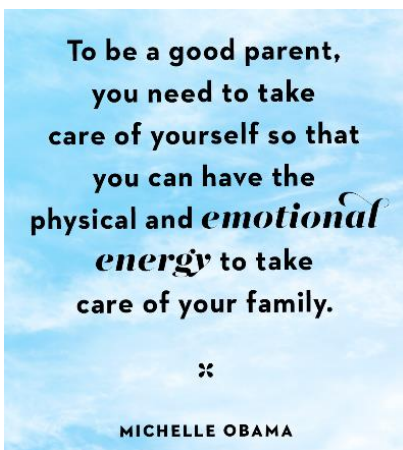
Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointer

Mental Wellbeing

It's hard to imagine how we would cope these days without technology. But most of us know that sinking feeling when we try and log in and find the technology doesn't want to play. My first resort is often to try "turning it off and on again" and it works almost every time! Perhaps we need to learn to do the same thing for ourselves? If only it were that simple! How can we look after our mental wellbeing and that of our children? Here are some brief thoughts on a huge subject ...

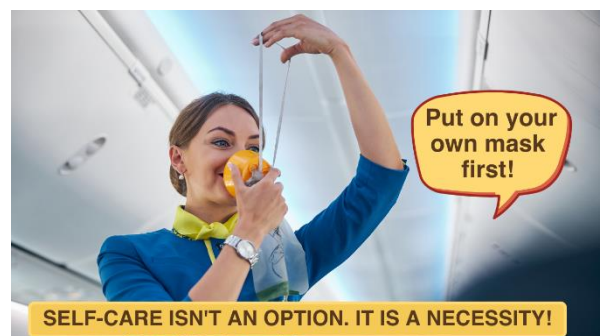


Most important of all, our children need to know that they are loved unconditionally. Whether or not they tidy their room when we ask them to; whether or not they're kind to their brother all the time; whether they get great results in their SATs or forget everything on the day. We can show our love for our children simply by spending time with them, playing with them, hanging out with them. Listen to them, ask them questions, show an interest in the things that interest them. Take their problems seriously, even if they seem trivial to you. Talk about emotions and allow them to express their feelings, both positive and negative.



We also need to take care of ourselves. We may think we are doing a great job of disguising our stress or anxiety but children pick up on our emotions whether we like it or not. Life is full of things that cause us to feel stressed or anxious but do we have people around us who we can share our worries with? One of the most humbling parts of my job is that sometimes parents come and chat with me and just tell me their "stuff". Frequently there is little I can do to "fix their stuff" but they will often say after our conversation that they feel better just for off-loading. Who can you off-load to? Do we need to chat? We also need to be really careful that we don't lean on our children emotionally, when we should be relying on an adult.

Starting next week, I will be running a 5 week course called the Wellbeing Toolkit for Parents. The material we'll look at tackles managing stress and anxiety, building parents' self-esteem and developing ways that we can care for ourselves. This is unlike all the other courses I run, in that it's not a parenting course, it's a course about parents. We recognise that to be effective parents we need to find healthy ways of managing our emotions, so that we can nurture our children and help them to become resilient. We look at mental wellbeing in this way - If you are on an aeroplane with your children and the oxygen masks come down, the instructions are to put your own mask on first and then your children's, otherwise you will pass out before you can help them and that's no use for you or them.



I still have a handful of places left on the course. If you're interested in joining us, or if you need help in any other way, you can contact me at parenting@foundrylanepriamry.co.uk .