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Part 1: Caring For The Caregiver

It is so important that we take care of ourselves so we can take care of our children. Daily strategies can help us “de-stress and re-energize”

Strategies include five stress busters:

- breathing
- walk, yoga, gentle exercise
- listen
- nurture
- sleep

Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body. Relaxation techniques can help you to better cope with everyday problems. Learning basic relaxation techniques is easy. These techniques can be done almost anywhere. The benefits of relaxation include:

- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration
- Reducing anger and frustration
- Slowing breathing rate and lowering blood pressure

Types of Relaxation Techniques include:

Autogenic Relaxation:

In this type of technique, you use visual imagery combined with body awareness to reduce stress.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

In this technique, you concentrate on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. You can work progressively from your toes up to the top of your head. It is best to tense for at least 5-7 seconds and relax for at least 15-30 seconds.

Visualization:

This technique utilizes mental images to take a journey to a peaceful calming place or situation. As you learn these techniques, you will become more aware of the tension you are holding in your body. This awareness will allow you to manage stress early.



Plenty of fresh air and exercise during the day help sleep at night

Part 2: Our Children

Sleep is essential. It is a biologically restorative state of consciousness, which replenishes the body on all levels; cellular, immune, metabolic, physical and emotional.

Sleep Deprivation is known to cause:

- Depressed Mood, and mood regulation difficulties
- Reduced Energy (or in some cases hyperactivity)
- Weakening of the Immune System

- Reduced Thresholds for Stress
- Altered Hormone Production
- Impaired Wound Healing

Children who don't sleep well are often cranky and irritable. Some have difficulty falling asleep, others staying asleep. Both can contribute to poor self-regulatory abilities.

Sleep Strategies:

Most parents report positive changes within 2 weeks using these strategies: Lots of exercise and fresh air in the afternoon!!! Not just to tire them out, but to change brain chemistry. Heavy work increases the production of calming and regulating chemicals in the brain!

1) Quiet activities after dinner. No television for 1 hour before bed, as TV produces excitatory brain waves, (even when the child is looking totally relaxed).

2) Establish set bedtime: 7:30 toddlers; 8:30 school aged. Children with modulation difficulties do not get the cues from their body that they need to slow down and sleep, we must help their body do this. Circadian rhythms affect brain function. Sleep is essential! Body temperature must drop to be able to fall asleep. Some children need help to lower their body temperature.

3) Use this same routine every night at the same time, it must become routine:





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30 minutes before bedtime

- Warm bath for 20 minutes, followed by a deep rubdown massage with towel to arms, legs, back, hands and feet. (Option: Add Epsom salts to bath for added relaxation.)
 - After bath, put on comfy PJ's and get straight into bed. (The body is now ready for sleep due to changes in body temperature). Read one short story and turn out lights.
 - Sleep music may be helpful we suggest (Baby go to sleep, or "Surf" CD by Hemi sync)
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Other helpful strategies:

- For children who "get too hot to sleep": Fan in the room (running all night) to keep body temperature low
 - For children who don't feel safe and wake for contact: Heavy blanket or weighted blanket or pillows wedged around them may be helpful.
 - For children who wake for food: (usually carbs or milk): Make sure child eats (at least 2 bite sized pieces of) protein at dinner (see nutrition section)
 - Baby Go To Sleep CD- helps children fall asleep easily in under 5 minutes (www.babygotosleep.com)
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Nutrition: Fuel for the Body and Brain

Eating to survive...or Thrive? It is a fact that humans can sustain existence on very little

food for extended periods of time. What is not generally recognized is the impact of nutritional imbalances on health and function.

A recent poll by the American Academy of Pediatrics, of 3,000 families of school-aged children, found that less than 1% were eating a balanced diet. Even more disturbing was the finding that 16% were not eating ANY foods with nutritional value, but subsisting on junk foods.

In our combined 50 years of working with children, we discovered that large numbers of children we were seeing for various therapies were missing essential nutritional body fuel. This contributed to the slow progress of the children developmentally and therapeutically. Backed by research, we began a mission to educate parents and teachers about fuel for the body and brain.

A Balanced Diet Includes:

“The Essential 6”

- o Protein (Eggs, fish, nuts, seeds, meat) 1/3 of meal (Palm sized portion))
- o Carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, and grains)(2/3 of plate)
- o Fats- Omega 3 fatty acids- (Nordic Naturals) and fish, olive oil or nuts
- o Vitamins- Basic multivitamin
*including the B vitamins
- o Minerals : basic multivitamin
- o Water : 6-8 cups a day





It is important to differentiate between “school food” and “party food”. It is also helpful to follow the plan outlined by Barry Sears” Eat the protein food first!

The Importance of WATER:

- Essential for cell communication
- First sign of dehydration is HUNGER
- Water is the best fluid
- A mere 2% drop in body water causes fuzzy memory
- Body and Brain need 6 to 8 glasses per day

Balanced Meals Include:

- 1/3 Good Quality Protein
 - Lean meats, Fish, Poultry, Nuts and Seeds
- 2/3 Complex Carbohydrates
 - Fruits, Vegetables, Whole Grain Rice, Whole grain breads
- 10% Good Fats
 - From Fish, Olive oil, or nuts.
- Water, Water, Water
- Lots of NATURAL bright colors
- Variety, and more variety

Good Meals Do NOT Include:

- Chemicals, coloring or artificial flavors and additives (see below)



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- Some of these have been linked to lower firing thresholds of neurons, meaning more reactivity.
- Trans-Fats
 - “Hydrogenated” oils of any kind
 - These block the absorption of the “good fats” (that nourish the brain)
 - Studies have shown that children with Low Levels of good fats in their system have more difficulty with hyperactivity, attention and mood swings
- Sugar or corn syrup
 - Fructose, “natural sugars” when added as an ingredient, maltose, dextrose, etc.
- Simple Carbohydrates
 - White flour, sugar, processed or enriched breads
 - AVOID most everything white
- Boxed, Packaged, or cellophane wrapped food.
 - These most always have trans fats and/or preservatives to keep them fresh for long periods without refrigeration
 - Remember....REAL food ROTS!

Additives, Coloring and Chemicals:

_ The “Top Ten” Worst Additives/Preservatives:

- Aspartame
- BVO
- BHA
- Any color plus #sign, such as Blue#5



- MSG
- Nitrites
- Saccharin
- Sulfur dioxide, sodium bisulfate and sulfites
- TBHQ
- Yellow #6 associated with asthma

Good Resources: www.feingold.org or
www.ADHDdiet.com

Activities to Build the Brain and Body

The brain needs nutrients, movement and touch to grow. Repetition of therapeutic activities, helps develop new pathways in the brain. Children with disorganized visual and movement systems may not benefit from recess in the same way that children with more organized nervous system's will. Providing these children with more input to their muscles and joints can help them feel more organized and calm.

Movement studies show:

Heavy resisted activities that use the joints improve body awareness and also promote the release of serotonin. Muscle /Joint activities are calming/organizing and to the body and brain.

Examples of these types of activities include:

- Digging in the sand/ dirt
- Climbing monkey bars
- Squeezing sponges, squeeze containers
- Pushing or dragging something
- Crawling games- tunnels / trails

Many motor activities help balance brain chemistry and impact attention, reflexes, endurance, memory, organization and behavior.

These include running, climbing, rolling *if a child is physically disorganized start with crawling and include heavy work activities.

If a child has difficulty with visual organization, ball games might actually make their attention and arousal and reactivity issues worse — start with a simple target for visual focus.

It is important to match the activities and the sensory environment to the needs of the child.



Yoga Practice

Matures the body and balances brain chemistry through the use of centering, postures, relaxation exercises and breathing.

How we breathe influences how our body works. Breathing patterns influence physiology. Significant improvements can be seen in alertness, attention, behavior, motor planning, and motor skills as well as stress chemistry, GI function, bowel and bladder when using yoga.

Breathing Exercises

Children who become easily overwhelmed or angry, can benefit from breathing activities such as sustained blowing. Young children can be taught this through bubbles, straws and tissue breath. Bubbles are great because they have a visual reinforcement for extended blowing (a concept difficult to teach to young children).

Touch

Touch has two separate pathways in the brain:

1. Light touch: Part of our protective system, and may be overly sensitive in some children

2. Deep pressure touch: Part of our discriminative processing in the brain. Children may be overly sensitive to light touch and under responsive to deep pressure touch. Inaccurate processing of deep pressure touch, and joint position, can result in inaccurate body awareness and clumsiness.

Deep pressure touch and heavy work activities can be very calming for children.

Be very careful with light touch or unexpected touch as both have an arousal effect on the nervous system.

Deep pressure touch activities can include:

- Heavy weighted blankets
- BEAR HUG PRESSURE VEST (These should always be used under the guidance of a trained therapists)
- Massage (In infants and toddlers can help to develop bonding and attachment, helps student develop body awareness and more optimal levels of alertness or calming)
- Vibration



SOUND and MUSIC

External rhythms influence internal states:
Attention, sleep, and digestion, on task behavior.

www.hemi-sync.com / www.babygotosleep.com



Strategies for Home and School

- Create an environment in which they can succeed. “Meet them where they are at.”
- REMEMBER: Behaviors are symptoms and/or communication.
- TEACH others to understand the child’s behaviors and needs.
- Daily routines should include movement, stress reduction, and balanced nutrients.
- Be Sure to consider: Sleep, Activities, Nutrition, and Environment

Resources:

www.babygotosleep.com- Sleep CD

“What’s Eating Your Child” By Kelly Dorfman

“Yoga For The Special Child” by Sonia Sumar

“Pediatric Massage For The Child With Special Needs

Kathy Fleming Drehobl, OTR and Mary Gengler Fuhr, OTR

The Get Ready To Learn Curriculum by Anne Buckley- Reen, OTR, RYT