

Parent Child Journey

An Individualized Approach to Raising Your Challenging Child

by Dan Shapiro, MD

Second Mile: Time-in and Self-Care

Why do time-in with your child?

- Get off the negative
- “Push off with the left-hand, pull near with the right”
- Relationship repair and maintenance
- Stress reduction

How to do time-in with your child: **“PIRCh”**

Plan:

- Select an appropriate physical space
- Get one-on-one
- Each child, each parent
- Dividing and peeling
- Starting and stopping
- Time-in is not just for parents

Individualize:

- Verbal attention
- Nonverbal attention
 - Facial expressions
 - Gestures
 - Touch
 - Music
 - Just being present
- Volume adjustment

Relax

Child-led

- Follow
- No questions, no commands, no teaching
- For the teenager

Self-acceptance: When parents confront the daily realities of having a challenging child, they go through different emotional phases. Rita Eichenstein (2015) describes five phases of adjustment. Similar to stages of grief, raising a child with developmental differences involves a kind of mourning:

1. Denial
2. Anger and blame
3. Bargaining and seeking solutions
4. The depression trap
5. Active Acceptance

Distorted (versus realistic) thinking:

- All or nothing
- Magnification or minimization
- Glass half-empty
- Emotional reasoning
- Jumping to conclusions
- Perfectionism, personalization, and self-labeling
- Shifting blame

Self-care:

- exercise, swim, walk, bike, dance
- read, write
- draw, paint, do other arts and crafts
- garden, hike, climb, kayak, canoe, boat, fish
- sing, play an instrument, listen to music
- cook or bake
- spend some time alone
- go to a favorite place
- relax with a movie or TV show
- practice yoga, mindfulness, meditation
- learn other relaxation techniques
- bath, shower, massage, spa
- eat healthy, but allow for a few special indulgences
- sleep well
- take a break from the phone, e-mails, and computers
- be careful about caffeine, alcohol, or other substance use
- ask for help from friends and family
- get respite care and babysitters for your children
- take a trip
- have a date night
- get physically close to those you love

- spend time with friends and family
- spend time with your dog or cat
- take a class, join an interest or activity group
- find a support group or friends who share similar challenges
- nurture positive connections with your school and work community
- be an advocate, activist, volunteer, or mentor
- practice rituals, celebrate holidays, go to religious services, pray
- see a mental health provider

Homework for the Second Mile

1. Practice “time-in” with your child(ren):
 - a. Get a plan
 - b. Select an appropriate physical space
 - c. Get one-on-one
 - d. Get relaxed
 - e. Get into whatever your child wants to do
 - f. Give custom-designed, positive attention
 - g. No questions, no commands, no teaching
 - h. Each child, each adult
2. Practice self-acceptance and self-care:
 - a. What phase of emotional adjustment are you in?
 - i. Denial
 - ii. Anger
 - iii. Bargaining and seeking solutions
 - iv. Depression
 - v. Active acceptance
 - b. What are your most common distorted thoughts? How can you replace them with other thoughts that are more accurate and realistic?
 - c. Do something for yourself? Try to establish a regular self-care routine.
 - d. Ask for help.