

Counselor's Corner: Parenting with Self-Compassion

"Social expectations teach us that being imperfect is synonymous with being inadequate. We are to hide our struggles, protect ourselves from shame, judgement, criticism and blame by seeking safety in pretending and perfection." -Brene Brown

We cannot be put together all the time. As adults we seem to maintain this concept that we aren't doing enough or we need to do better. What if instead of saying, "I'm not good enough" or "I'm failing," we recognize that we are doing what we can. Sometimes we forget to switch the laundry to the dryer or take the pizza out of the oven before it burns. That's okay. Those are the moments where self-compassion is so important. When we continuously focus on this belief that mistakes equal failure, we break ourselves down and lead ourselves to burnout. What would happen, if instead of immediately jumping to, "there I go again; I'm a terrible parent," we took a breath and thought, "this is hard and I'm trying." Provide ourselves with the same grace, kindness, and patience we place towards children, family, and friends. "It's okay that you spilt your milk, let's clean it up."

Society seems to push this idea that parenting is all positives and smooth sailing; it's rewarding, fulfilling, and any difficulties are easy to overcome. Let's be honest though, parenthood can really test one's patience, mental flexibility, and emotional stability. Children, as much as we love them, can be a challenge; and what works for one child does not always work for another. Push aside the "should-s" and "supposed-to-s" of parenting. Stop scrolling through social media and comparing yourself to the carefully picked photos of a child's birthday party or vacation. Rather than thinking, "they seem so put together, why am I a mess?" consider what we may not see in that media post - Suzy crying because the birthday candles are the wrong color or forgetting the juice boxes for Colton's soccer game after arriving 10 minutes late. Remember, no one truly has their life put together. Acknowledge you are doing what you can, provide yourself some self-compassion, and know it's okay to express parental burnout. In the words of Brene Brown, "It is in the process of embracing our imperfections that we find our truest gifts: courage, compassion, and connection."

