

# NATASHA FREEMANTLE

## Kids Mental Health Collective

Hi there,

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022 I, Natasha Freemantle, hosted a webinar on how to manage mental health in the home. The lessons learned and shared were incredibly valuable and I felt they would do more good if shared more widely.

Thank you for making the mental health of yourself and your family a priority by requesting the overview of this webinar.

Below is a brief summary of what was discussed.

Please do contact myself or either of the other speakers should you have any questions:

Terence Mentor: <https://www.afrodaddyonline.com/>

Claire McPhail: <https://enspiring.co.za/about-me/>

Natasha Freemantle: <http://natashafreemantle.com>

Speaker: Terence Mentor (Afrodaddy )

Own personal warning signs that mental health was suffering:

Work avoidance

- Delaying or avoiding completing tasks due to mental overwhelm

Irritability

- Increased irritability over a short period of time
- Unreasonable negative responses to minor events

Less talkative

- Withdrawing from social interactions

Constantly needing stimulation

- Constantly seeking distractions, such as social media, TV, and gaming, to avoid sitting with what is on your mind

Low self-esteem and self-dismissive language

- Feelings of worthlessness and having a warped sense of value just for being himself
- Not feeling worthy of love/help

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Loss of appetite and enjoyment of food

- Disinterest in food, weight loss

Additional Symptoms reported by others:

- No longer enjoying things you previously enjoyed
- Too much or too little sleep
- Under/overeating

How you as a wife/partner can assist your husband/partner:

Investigate your own internal beliefs about men's mental health

- How do you feel seeing men talk about their emotions? How would you feel about your partner coming to you with feelings of vulnerability? How does this translate to how you interact with him regarding his mental health?

Talk about mental health but relate it to physical health

- When you break a leg you go to the Dr, he gives you crutches to give support to your body while it heals the broken bone. Talking through feelings or taking medication acts just like this crutch, it is not a sign of weakness but just a form of support to get you on the road to health again.
- Mental health is as important as physical health and ask for help with either should be viewed as normal and necessary when needed

Look for examples in your community/social circle of men who have received mental health support

Remind him that he is worthy of receiving help

- Many men believe their entire worth rests in their ability to provide. They need to be reminded that they are more than what they can provide for, they are worthy of help, love and acceptance just because of who they are as a human being

Patience

- Be patient with your partner, and support them on their journey to regaining their mental health. Always keep the door open for open communication

Speaker: Claire McPhail (Enspiring)

We need to constantly be aware of the state of our body, and how we are feeling every day. Are you ok? Are you happy or just getting by each day? What attitude are you waking up with? What are your physical ailments telling you?

Aspects of life to consider as presented in the wheel of life:

- Financial and career
- Mental and educational
- Physical and health
- Social and cultural
- Spiritual and ethical
- Family and home

Are you putting all your focus into one and not enough into another? This leads to unsustainable living, the wheel, that drives us forwards becomes misshapen making the movement forward more difficult.

Recommended strategies:

Coaching, particularly group coaching as we can see that others are going through the same thing

Communication is key

Self-care is fundamental to keeping ourselves as moms working at our best. Looking after your mental and physical health is not selfish it is critical

Healthy eating and drinking

Educate yourself on anxiety and depression so you become more self-aware

Don't spend too much time alone in your own head space

Know your triggers and know your healers, shift your behaviour and surroundings to increase your time in the healing space

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Parenting tip 1:

How to approach your child's negative behaviour so that it doesn't escalate into a screaming match/full blown meltdown so as to minimize your own stress.

First understand how your child's brain works:

- Your child's brain function is most developed in the part that is responsible for their survival, it evaluates situations and executes either fight flight or freeze
- The part of the brain that is responsible for logic, problem-solving, impulse-control is only fully developed by age 25
- Any unpleasant or difficult situation/experience of feelings is perceived by your child as life-threatening and they react with fight, flight or freeze, showing up as:

<b>Fight</b>	<b>Flight</b>	<b>Freeze</b>
<b>Yelling, screaming, using mean words</b>	<b>Running away</b>	<b>Going blank</b>
<b>Hitting, kicking, biting</b>	<b>Lack of attention</b>	<b>Isolates themselves</b>
<b>Aggression</b>	<b>Fidgeting</b>	<b>Verbally unresponsive "I don't know"</b>
<b>Irritability</b>	<b>Hyperactive</b>	<b>Difficulty completing tasks</b>
<b>Acting defensively</b>	<b>Restless</b>	<b>Daydreaming</b>
	<b>Anxious</b>	<b>Depressed</b>
	<b>Scared</b>	<b>Malaise</b>
	<b>Avoidance</b>	

Your job as a parent is to show them how to self-regulate and make sense of a situation since their brains are still learning how to do this on their own.

Dismiss the idea that bad behaviour is a manipulation tactic and rather see it as them communicating with you that they need help navigating difficult feelings brought on by a specific event.

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In a moment when your child is having a meltdown, kicking or screaming or acting dismissive, try the following to extinguish the situation:

- Check in on your emotions, if you need to calm yourself first do so, take a few breaths
- Approach the child at their level, and explain the situation as they see it so they feel seen. Label the emotions so they can learn the name for each of their feelings
- Offer a calming strategy such as a breathing exercise or a hug
- Only once they have calmed down, offer reasoning and solutions
- In times of continued distress redirect them to a new activity and shut down the activity that is causing them so much stress

You as the parent can then continue doing what you need to do, having no additional stress or added guilt for exploding at your child.

Parenting tip 2:

How to repair a moment that you lashed out at your child, due to stress, and turn it around and make it a lesson in how to self-regulate and label our emotions.

Eg. Your child spills juice on the floor as you are rushing to leave the house. You are stressed by time constraints, you lash out at them. You can correct this situation by:

- Acknowledging your error and apologising, explaining why you lashed out...

"I am very sorry for shouting at you about spilling your juice, I know it was just a mistake. Mommy is just having some big feelings at the moment because I am trying to get us to the party on time and there is a lot to do.

- Demonstrating tactics you will use to regulate your feelings:

'What I am going to do to calm myself is take a few big breaths to calm my brain and my big feelings and then we can clean up the mess together and get on our way.

- Maintain any boundaries or share any further information:

'What do you think of maybe next time putting your cup further in on the table so it can't fall off so easily next time'

Remember there are many opportunities for you to demonstrate self-regulation and teach them the labels that accompany various emotions. Examples of this are:

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- In traffic – ‘Wow this traffic is making me feel very anxious because we are going to be late. I can’t do anything about it though so I am just going to take a few big breaths and calm myself down so it doesn’t feel as hard’
- During load-shedding - Not having any power makes me so angry, does it make you angry. I think while we wait for it to come back on let’s go run around the garden and get our angry energy out
- When dad/granny/nanny is late – I am feeling quite frustrated that we have to wait, I think I will use the time we have to wait to rather play a fun game or read a book, that will make me feel calmer.

We all know parenting is hard but it can be made a lot easier with just a few small persistent changes. I hope these 2 tactics sound helpful to you and that you will give them the chance to make a difference in your home. Just remember consistency and patience and a lot of checking in on your own emotions are key to the success of these tools. The more mentally healthy we are as parents the more likely our children are to grow up emotionally intelligent.