Growing a Self-Compassionate Voice

Be the Voice That You Want Your Kids to Internalize

The way we talk to children makes a big difference in how children talk to themselves. When children have repeated experiences of being validated and cared for, the external support can become internalized as an inner self-compassionate voice. Research suggests when caregiver and parents are supportive and empathetic, their kids learn to respond to themselves with kindness.

What do we do when our voice is not the voice we want children to internalize? We are not perfect, and adults have hard days too. When this happens, ironically enough— we need to give ourselves more compassion. Being hard on ourselves when we fall short as caregivers can be just like us being hard on kids.

When we as adults struggle with showing up as we wish for children we can offer our ourselves three elements of self-compassion:

- **Mindfulness**: Okay, I’m struggling right now. I’m feeling overwhelmed.
- **Common humanity**: I am not the only parent who struggles and get overwhelmed.
- **Kindness**: I am still a good person. I am a good parent. I will try again.
Parents sometimes may think they are supposed to “have it all together” for their kids, when children actually need caregivers who are appropriately vulnerable with their struggles and model self-compassion.

This can be as simple as identifying and verbalizing that we are having a hard day— and that this happens to everyone sometimes— and sharing that we might need a minute to breathe, reset or take a little break before moving onto the next thing.

To teach children self-compassion it’s helpful for us as adults to lean and embrace our own habits around feelings.

What does happy look like?
What do we do when we are sad?
What does feeling angry look like?
What do we do when we are scared?

As children become more aware and learn about their feeling habits, they learn that all these feelings are okay; they are normal, and they are experienced by everyone. From here we can support kids in learning skills to better express and cope with feelings.

“Our children learn to be self-compassionate by watching us”

Talk to yourself like you talk to someone you love—
—Brene Brown

Model Self-Compassion— It’s Good For You Too!

Playfully Teaching Children
How to Practice Self-Compassion

Questions, Concerns or Just want to Chat?

“BE KIND to Yourself”

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Want to know more about Infant and Toddler Mental Health Consultation and how we can work together?
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