

## Maintaining Your Mental Health – For Your Sake and Your Children’s

Often missing from the discussion on mental health is how a parent’s mental health affects children, as well as what practical steps parents can take to maintain their mental health and well-being. Here is guidance from Marti:

### I. Why this issue is so important?

- Stress, anxiety and depression compromise parenting
  - We see our children’s behavior through a gray lens
  - We are less emotionally available to our children
  - Our emotions are contagious, spilling over to our children
- Just as we can take steps to maintain our physical health, so can we take steps to maintain our mental health
  - Our children will benefit from our improved state of mind and will learn from our positive example
  - Even if we have a mental illness and are being treated for it, these practical steps can optimize our health and well-being

### II. Practical tips

- Learn mind-body techniques for managing stress
  - Meditation, yoga and other mindfulness techniques are powerful stress relievers
  - Even just 30 seconds of deep breathing can be calming, both for parents and children
  - Seek out resources for learning these techniques and then practice them with your children
- Be active, especially outdoors
  - Physical activity stimulates natural mood enhancers in your brain and being outdoors in a natural environment with trees and water reduces stress for people of all ages
  - Make nature breaks a part of life for you and your children
- Strengthen your support system
  - Isolation feeds anxiety and depression, but a strong support system nurtures mental health
  - Reach out to friends, family, your faith community or a formal support group of people with similar interests or needs
- If you feel sad, hopeless, anxious or irritable for a prolonged period, seek help from a mental health professional
  - There is no shame in getting help, and it can make all the difference for you and your children