

# Ep #134 Preventing Parenting burnout and exhaustion

This is episode 134.

We welcome you to The ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Well, hello, my friends. How are you? Hope everything is going well. Thank you for joining me today. I'm a Siope, your host here at The ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. And today, we are going to be talking about parental burnout and ADHD parents feeling alone.

Now, not only ADHD parents, but many parents are feeling alone, and they're struggling right now. And so we're going to be talking a little bit about the dynamics in relation to feeling alone as a parent. And then we're going to be talking also about some skills that you can use with your children in order to help you deal with the burnout, but also in helping your children not aggravate situations to make them worse because I know that something that happens sometimes.

We have a lot to cover today. [And in fact, we're going to go over a study that came out in regards to parent burnout.](#)

Just so you can understand this is not something you're making up. And if you feel like, "Hey, I don't get how my parents did this?" It was a very different time then. The study explains some of the reasons why there are a lot of parents who are struggling right now, why there's a lot of burnout in parenting. So we're going to talk about that.

The three areas that we are going to be discussing during this podcast are: adjusting your expectations to reality, because that is going to be essential for your wellbeing. And so you don't burn out.

We're going to talk about connections because every time a child is throwing a tantrum, every time they're crying, whenever they're doing something like that with you and it aggravates you, just understand that they're seeking connection at that time. That's what they're doing. They're trying to find a way to connect, to communicate, to interact. So we're going to talk about connections. We're going to talk about expectations.

The third thing is that we are always in the mindset of teaching. We're not in the mindset of punishing. And I have to really emphasize that the approach that we use here at Smarter Parenting is the Teaching-Family Model.

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The Teaching-Family Model is entirely focused on the relationship and the wellbeing of your children and your relationship with them long-term. You can always get quick fixes to have kids fix their behaviors super quick by being aggressive or being mean, but those things leave scars, and those are difficult for children emotionally. And in the long run, it does not serve anyone. So we are here to focus on teaching rather than punishing.

Now there's a lot parents who are like, "Hey, I just need to punish my kids for the things that they do." Okay. We're not about punishing, we're about teaching. Which means we do believe in consequences. We do believe in natural consequences for negative behaviors.

However, how we work through those is in a way your child will still feel connected to you. That the relationship it is still intact. And for parents, that is a good place to be, because some of the burnout that a lot of parents feel come from the disconnection that they feel with their kids. This overall, "I don't get my kids. I don't understand them. They don't get me." It's just this internal battle that is happening.

So we have a lot to talk about today.

As you can tell, I'm super excited to talk about it though. So let's start off with the study because I think it's important. And then I'll introduce you to Trisha and her two children, Enid and Lloyd. Enid is five, six years old. Lloyd is four. And the issues that they had with burnout.

So Trisha just felt like she had a lot of burnout. We're going to talk about them and their experience and the ways that we worked around helping her deal with those feelings, those strong feelings of feeling tired and just burned out of parenting.

Let's be honest. I think we've all been there at one point or another. None of us are perfect parents. I'm not a perfect parent. That's for sure. And you can ask my daughter about that, but I do do my best. And if you can have more good days than bad days, then you're you're in good shape.

Let's talk about the study.

This study is really fascinating. Now, researchers began to recognize that parental burnout was something a lot of parents were reporting. And it's a condition in which exhausted parents become overwhelmed by their role as primary carers. This leads to emotional distance from their children, the ineffectiveness of their role as a parent, neglect, and worse in some cases. So even leading towards abuse.

Now the study was performed actually outside of the United States, even though they included people in the United States, but it was done before COVID hit. So it's started between March 2018 until March 2020. And what they had is they surveyed 17,000 parents living in 42 countries around the world.

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Now what they did was they sent them information and had them fill out a questionnaire about their parenting. So they started to collect this information to figure out exactly why are parents report burnout, what's going on? And is there a difference from place to place? Now, the parents were assessed for parental burnout, with the questionnaire that focused on their emotional exhaustion, their emotional distancing from their children, the loss of pleasure in being a parent, and the contrast that they felt with what they thought parenting was going to be like.

And what was interesting is that the results showed that the prevalence of parental burnout varies greatly from country to country. But when the researchers compared the burnout rates to a set of independent measures and cultural values, because they got all this data and they were trying to figure it out, they found an interesting link.

Now this is what they said. "Individualistic cultures in particular displayed a noticeably higher prevalence and mean level of parental burnout." So if you're wondering what that means, individualistic cultures, cultures that focus on individuals or individualism like, "I need to do everything on my own. I can handle this. I can do this." Those countries tended to have higher reports of parental burnout.

Now, continuing on with what they said, "Indeed individualism plays a larger role in parental burnout than either economic inequalities across countries, or any other individual or family characteristic examined so far, including the number and age of children and the number of hours spent with them."

So even economics didn't really effect the reporting of parental burnout, as much as it did these cultural values of individualism.

Now I'm not pro or against or anything like that, but I think it's fascinating and it's important for us to understand in what culture were we raised and in what culture are we raising our children? In which ways are we evaluating our own burnout? And is this something that is happening? Am I trying to do too much on my own? Am I trying to figure out too much on my own? Am I doing things all by myself?

This is going to be interesting as we talked about Trisha and her two kids.

So, let's keep talking about this. Specifically, the trend meant Western or Euro American countries, which tend to rank higher for individualism, also reflected high levels of parental burnout. Now in the results, what they found is that Belgium showed the highest rate of burnout at 8.1% of parents. The US followed by 7.9%. And Poland was that 7.7%. And those were the overall highest in the study.

In contrast, many of the South American, African and Asian countries, tended to have a low prevalence of parental burnout, which the researchers hypothetically attribute to cultural factors, while they acknowledged that the link they've identified requires further study.

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I'm hoping that we can continue this study and go even deeper to understand this trend of parental burnout, because I'll be honest with you, parental burnout is one of the leading factors for people seeking out coaching. They call in because they're pretty much spent and they're tired and they just are struggling.

This is fascinating research. And for me, I'm always fascinated in doing research in regards to parental burnout. I'm doing it in regards to development with children, parental relationships with children. I mean, I read a lot everybody. I read a lot and I do a lot of research and I keep on top of the trends and the studies that are coming out.

But, this study is really interesting. And so I wanted to share it here because I know there are a lot of parents who are dealing with this frustration of, "I am doing this on my own." And if you are doing it on your own, you will feel burnout. You will feel it because it's a difficult thing to manage your life, your own things that are happening with work and managing bills and raising children. It's a very difficult thing to balance everything. And anyone that says that they can do all of it all the time at 100%. Let's be honest. They're not telling the truth because we all need help. I mean, we are human beings. We all have faults. And we all need help. Even I need help.

So be aware that parental burnout is something that's happening across the country. There are a lot of parents who are struggling with this right now. And I think every parent struggles with it at one point during their parental journey.

I don't think I know any parent that just says, "Well, that was super easy," in raising their kids. I mean, I have never heard that from anybody. And if you have, I highly doubt they did their job, or even cared about the child.

Anyways, I'm going to leave a link in the show notes so you can jump over to [smarterparenting.com](http://smarterparenting.com). Look for this episode. This is podcast episode 134. You will find the link to this study. I think it's really great for you to just delve a little bit deeper and understand some of the things they were able to pull out from the study and some of the deductions they made.

Now, again, I know they're going to do more studies and they're going to delve deeper into what this all means, and we'll get further evidence, but this is a good jumping off point to talk about the subject of parental burnout. And this is also ammunition for you to use with your parents or grandparents or whoever else comes in and criticizes you as a parent, because this happens.

More often than not I hear this all the time with a lot of parents. They're like, "Yeah, well, my parents don't get that this is hard." It is hard. It is super hard. It is super, super hard. They feel like, "Hey, we did it. You can do it." Things are a lot different. The world is different. Parenting has changed. The other part is that we have become more individualized. I mean, I think we focus on the power of one individual to stand out.

I come from a culturally collective society. I was raised by my parents who come from like a community environment. And so the family dynamics with my parents and my families and aunts

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and uncles growing up was that my parents were my parents, but my aunts and my uncles were also my parents. In that they could discipline me and they could teach me. They were just an extension of my parents. And so there was a community raising me. And so I can understand why in that instance, it was easier, a lot easier.

Nowadays, people are connected, but they're connected more virtually. We don't spend a lot of time with our neighbors. We don't spend a ton of time with our family members. Sometimes we live in different cities. All those things contribute to the exhaustion that you may be feeling. So finding a community of other parents who may feel similar to you or going through the same struggles that you are, that is always going to be helpful.

Anyways, we've talked about the study, some of these things. I want you to really evaluate, in what ways are you isolated as a parent? Because if you are isolated, I highly recommend you find a way to connect with someone to share this experience with.

Now, if you feel like you need to connect with your spouse about it, and you're on different planes, because that's isolating too, have that discussion. Use Effective Communication that we have on the Smarter Parenting website. If you need to reach out to a friend and make a friend who has a child similar to yours, that is always helpful. It's nice to talk to somebody and create community. I'm a firm believer in community.

So if you need to reach out to a sibling, that's great. Wherever you can find that community, look for it. Find it. If it's in your church. If it's in your neighborhood. If it's in your bowling club. Whatever it may be, find support for you and be able to work through that.

Now, let's talk about Trisha, Enid and Lloyd. Trisha is a mother, single mother, and she called in to talk about her children, Enid and Lloyd, about what to do, because she would lay down the rules and she would have very specific things she wanted her children to do.

And when they argued with her, it was very difficult for her to not feel overwhelmed herself. So Enid is five, turning six soon, and Lloyd is four. Some of the simple rules that they have is like: put your plate in the kitchen sink after dinner, clean up after your toys, make your bed. They had some very simple rules that she wanted to establish with her children.

Now in exploring this with Trisha, Trisha did report, "Hey, I'm doing this on my own. I don't have support." And so we talked about that and we evaluated that. And then we had to talk about the very first topic I want to bring up. In my discussion with Trisha, we had to address expectations.

And these are her expectations for the kids and her own expectations as a parent, two very separate things. What can you expect your children to do? Not what you dream your children can do, not what you hope your children can do, but what expectations are realistic for where they're at right now?

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Evaluate that. And then you have to evaluate where are you emotionally in dealing with these issues when they pop up? Are you coming to the situation in a difficult space? Are you already clogged and fogged up in your own brain with how to address these issues? What are the expectations for your children? What are your own expectations?

Because if your expectations are changing consistently, you're only telling your children, you're modeling for them, that things can change all the time and children need consistency. That's how they learn that there are consequences to behaviors when things are consistent, there's a sense of safety there. So we had to explore that quite a bit.

Now, in talking to her about that, we actually went deeper into her own expectations for herself. We talked about triggers, things that trigger her about what happened. So with Lloyd, who's four years old, whenever she gave an instruction and he didn't follow through and she would give a consequence, he would just cry. He would just non-stop cry. That's all he would do. He would just cry, cry, cry. She tried to calm him. He would just continue to cry. And so we evaluated that. And what I found in her interaction with Lloyd was that the more he cried, the more upset she became. And the more upset she became, the more triggered she became. And so expectations would consistently change for her.

As we were discussing this whole issue of Lloyd crying, not stopping, and then Trisha just becoming more and more aggravated and upset. And as we discussed the triggers and recognizing what those triggers were, and how they manifested with her and her emotions and in her body, we had a really frank discussion.

Now I'm going to share this because I think it's important for all parents to know. You are responsible for your own triggers. So your children may misbehave, but you're still responsible for your reaction back. It sounds harsh, but I'm just being honest with you. As the parent, you are responsible for your own triggers. So if something triggers you, you are responsible for your own self and how you respond to that.

So as we discuss this, Trisha is like, "Ah, but it's so hard. He just makes me cry." I had to stop her and I said, "No, no. You're saying he's making you do something. You're saying he's making you and putting you in a place. When in reality, you are responsible for where you decide you're going to go with this." So this led into the second part of our discussion, which was connectedness.

So Lloyd is crying and he's trying to communicate something obviously through the crying. Displeasure, he doesn't want to do it. Whatever it is, he's decided that crying is going to be the way he's going to manifest it. He's seeking some type of connection with her.

So as we focused on the triggers that she was feeling and being responsible for her own triggers, I said, "Okay, now that you realize you have a decision to make, whenever a tantrum happens, whenever a misbehavior happens, you have a decision to make, what are you going

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to do? How are you going to engage with your child? Are you going to try and gain complete control over everything, or you're going to try and create a connection?"

And connection is what we should be focused on. How can we connect with our children in a way that our children will recognize, "Okay, let's figure something out and let's work with this." Rather than butting heads consistently over and over and over again.

During this whole process with Trisha, and thank you, Trisha for letting me use your name during this podcast, we focused on Preventive Teaching. If you're a first-time listener to this podcast, I go through the skills that we use on the Smarter Parenting website, which are from the Teaching-Family Model.

So the skill of Preventive Teaching is a skill that you teach your child what to do and how to behave before a situation arises. In this case, I was using Preventive Teaching as a way for Trisha to know exactly what she needs to do in order to address a difficult situation that was happening.

As you can see, these skills are very flexible. You can use them and for a child and you can use them as a parent and you can use them in your own interaction and engagement with your children. It takes a lot of self-reflection, and that's one thing I was super proud of Trisha for. Is because she spent some time really evaluating all of this internal dialogue that was happening with her in order to get better.

With Trisha, we went through the steps of Preventive Teaching. Let me go through this steps because I think it's important, and I want you to be able to apply this by the end of the podcast in your own life.

Step number one, you need to say something positive.

Now, in the case of using this with your child, you say something positive about your child's behavior, or you express empathy about how they may be feeling. In this case, I wanted Trisha to be able to do this with herself. So she needs to say something positive about her behavior or express empathy about how she may be feeling. She may be feeling, "I am feeling overwhelmed right now," and it's okay. That's expressing empathy. I wanted her to be able to do this internally.

Step number two, describe how you want your child to act. Avoid telling your child what you don't want.

In this step, I wanted Trisha to use the skill for herself. So I wanted her to describe how she wanted to act in the situation with Lloyd crying all over the place. Trisha came up with a list of ways she wanted to engage. So she said, "Okay, this is what I want. I want to get down on his level. I want to put a reassuring arm on him. I want to listen to him. I want to pay attention to his face. I want to speak softly and quietly to him, even though he's crying." So she came up with

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these and we have to describe them in depth. And we wrote them down so she knew exactly what it was.

Now, step number three is give a meaningful reason to behave that way. And this has to be motivating for the person that needs to behave this way. With Trisha, I asked her, "What is the benefit of behaving this way, of doing that?" And she said, "Well, because if I'm in control of how I react to what's happening right now, then I am able to help my child more fully. I'll be more present and it won't be me feeling overwhelmed. I'll actually be in a place of understanding." And it was beautiful. It was beautiful.

And so I asked her, "Is this meaningful for you?" And she's like, "Yeah, absolutely. I want to connect with my children. I want them to know I'm here for them. I want them to know that I am willing to do what I can to help them." So give a meaningful reason. And so she's doing that for herself. This is the meaningful reason that Trisha is going to kneel down, place her arm there in a comforting way. Pay attention to him. Look in his face. Listen to what he says and speak softly. All those things contribute to things that are meaningful to Trisha in the long run, which is establishing a great relationship with her son.

What we did during the call is we practiced it. That's step number four of Preventive Teaching.

I demonstrated first, being Trisha, and she acted like her son in order to help her see what it's like. And after she was able to observe, she noticed some things that I did that were interesting to her. For example, I took some pauses in between and just allowed the silence and the crying to happen. And then I would ask a question or reach out in an empathetic way. And she's like, "Okay, I never thought of doing it that way, but it feels good and it sounds good." And this is why Role-playing is so important people.

So we flipped roles and now she was mom and I was playing Lloyd. And it's interesting to do all of this Role-playing on Zoom. Let me tell you, it's kind of hilarious. And yet it's great because by the end of the call, she knew exactly how it felt, what it looked like, what it was going to feel like in her interaction with her child. So we practiced it over and over and over again. We practiced it until she felt confident in the way that she was going to approach her child when he started crying. So we practiced it.

Now, step number five in Preventive Teaching is to find something positive that they did during the Role-play.

So I found something positive she did, which was she never gave up. She was consistent in what she wanted to do.

And we practice, which is step six.

Just keep going over until she has it in her head, what she's going to do. Now, what we've done through this whole process, me and Trisha, is that we've actually changed the expectation,

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which is the very first thing that I wanted to focus on, the expectation she had with her child when he has a tantrum behavior. And we've also established a way to have a connection with her child.

Now, when I was getting off the phone with Trisha, I said, "Okay, you know what to do, we've practiced this enough. You've seen it, you've felt it, you know what it looks like. You've heard it. We've done this enough. That as soon as he starts crying and you start to feel those triggers happening, that lead to parental burnout, you know exactly what to do." And she's like, "I do know what to do." And I said, "Okay, wonderful."

I was really focused on her understanding that the goal here is to teach. We're always teaching our children regardless of what we say and what we do, just being in the same room, we are teaching our children things. Just in our behavior, just in the way that we look at them, we're teaching them and they're soaking it up and interpreting it. So teaching is way more important.

Now we could have gone the route where I said, "Well, he's crying. Let's just give him a consequence and be on our merry way." Yeah, that would be great, but that doesn't really answer the need for connection. It doesn't answer the need for adjusting expectations so we can both be on the same page and working towards something. It doesn't address that he's going to be able to self-regulate and feel safe in his home environment and to be together with his mom who is running a tight ship at her house, but she's doing it alone.

And the parental burnout is real. I mean, the studies have shown that it's real. Fascinating. It was just a fascinating time to work. And this is why I love coaching people. I love it when you call in and you have these questions and we can work around it.

I have come to the conclusion that parenting help is the exact same thing as self-help. Because not only are we helping your child, we're actually helping you as a parent, focus and do things that you would normally not do in order to create a stronger relationship with your children.

I absolutely love it when you call in with these questions. And I love when you can call in and we can make it fit for your family and what is happening with you. I'm always focused on the strengths of you as a parent and the strengths of a child, because I have seen this happen over and over again.

Strengths have a way of addressing even negative behaviors if we focus on them and build them up. They tend to interact and influence negative behaviors and turn them into more positive behaviors. We'll talk about that in another podcast.

I just want to give a shout out to Trisha and to Enid and Lloyd for allowing me to share their story. It's such a blessing to be able to work with wonderful parents out there who are doing such a great job at raising their children.

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The last thing I recommended for Trisha to do is to find community wherever she is. And I told her, "If you're looking for community, can be part of Smarter Parenting's community." I mean, I'm part of her community now. Even though we're in different places, I am part of her community and I'm here to support and to strengthen and to help. And just knowing somebody's there and sharing some of these things with them in a non-judgemental sphere allows you to deal with the burnout that a lot of parents are feeling.

So I just want to give everyone out there a big hug. I want you to know how much I care for you and for all the work that you're doing as parents. Thank you. Thank you for taking the time and the effort. You love your children. I love my child. We do our best, absolute best that we can to raise them the best we can. And it's challenging. It's a very challenging time.

One last thing I want to share is I always find it interesting when I have somebody challenging this idea that things are so much different now, but the reality is, is we are raised by parents in a different time because things were very different, but they were using techniques that were from a different time as well.

It's kind of like school. You go to school, you're learning from teachers who have been trained in an older education, unless they continually learn and learn and learn more and are on the cutting edge of new technology. But they are relying on information that's even older than they are. So it's the same with parenting in some ways.

Our parents, your parents, my parents, they function in the sphere of the world where they were happy that they were using techniques that were older than they were. And here we are in an age where technology can help us in so many ways, and yet can be detrimental in so many ways.

I'm so grateful for the technology because now, studies like the one that I shared at the beginning of this podcast are available and we can look at them almost in exact real time and make adjustments as we go. That has never been possible before. I mean, before, if you wanted to know a meaning of a word, you had to look in a dictionary that was printed maybe 10 years ago to get the word. And now as language evolves and changes, there are new words popping up all the time and all you need to do is do a search online and you can figure it out. It's kind of crazy, kind of scary, but you are doing a unique work right now with your kids. And in the history of mankind, parenting has never been like this.

So kudos to you. You're all pioneers in your own ways. And I just want to say, thanks for joining me today. We have so much more to cover.

If you're interested, sign up for coaching, but visit [SmarterParenting.com](https://SmarterParenting.com). Look for this episode, 134 in the note. I will leave a link to the study. Go ahead and take a look at it. Read it. And if you have any questions, just send me a message. I'm happy to have you send me any questions that you may have.

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That's it from me, and I will see you again next week.

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