

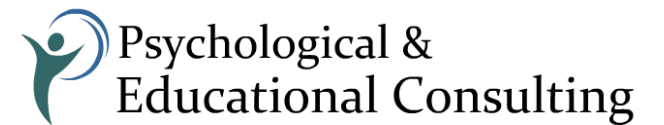


MANAGING STRESS:

PARENTING A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

DR. LIZ MATHEIS

Licensed Clinical Psychologist





AGENDA

- Special Needs, defined
- Your Emotional Journey
- PTSD
- Coping
- When to Seek Professional Help



SPECIAL NEEDS, DEFINED

- Learning difficulties
- Behavioral struggles
- Sensory struggles
- Communication
- Emotional
- Medical illness
 - Epilepsy, Down Syndrome



THE PARENTING JOURNEY

WELCOME TO HOLLAND Emily Perl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met. It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

THE PARENTING JOURNEY, CONT.

3 PHASES

- Insurmountable Guilt
- Feeling 'Ineffective'
- Acceptance



[READ THIS BLOG:](#)

The Journey of the
Parent with a Special
Needs Child,
SpecialNeeds.com



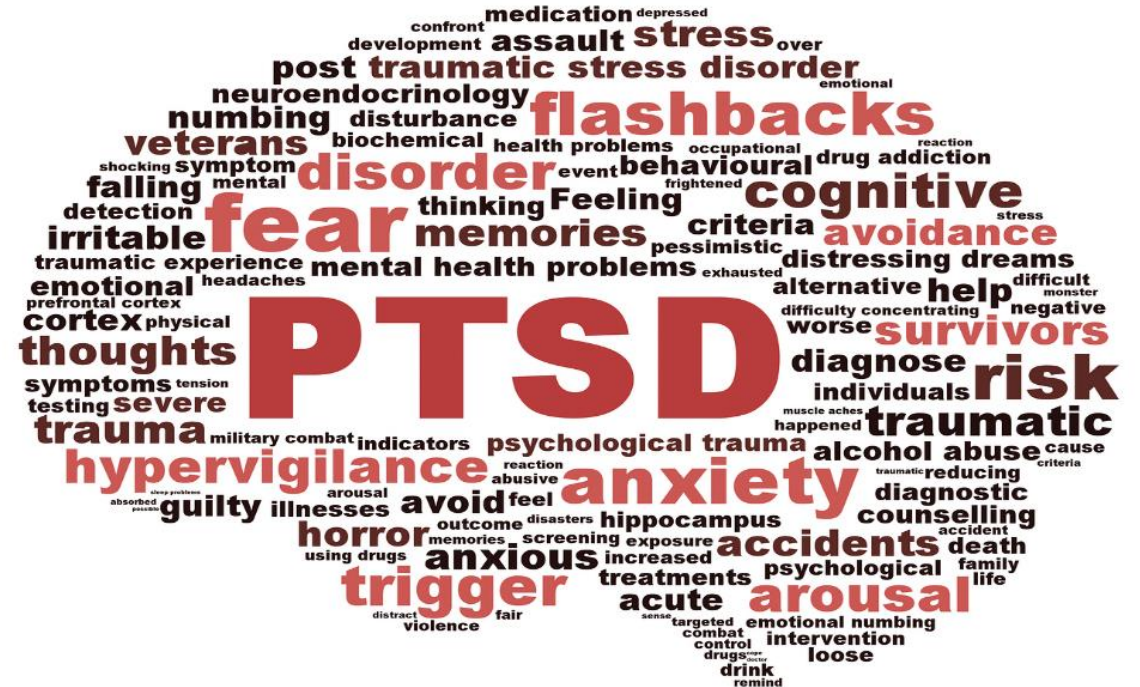
CAN PARENTING TRAUMA LEAD TO PTSD?

- Receiving a shocking diagnosis
- Having an aggressive child towards you
- Having your child terminated from preschool/private school
- Finding the 'right' school
- Marital conflict
- Frequent hospitalizations
- Struggling to find the 'right' physician or therapist

CAN PARENTING TRAUMA LEAD TO PTSD?

YES!

- Re-experiencing
- Hopelessness/Helplessness
- Hyper-vigilant
- Avoiding
- Anxious
- Poor Sleep and/or Nightmares
- Poor Focus



CAN PARENTING TRAUMA LEAD TO PTSD?

- Chronic Stress
- Constant anticipation of triggers
- Grieving
- Feeling lonely and alone
- Feeling ashamed
- Not being able to 'let go



COPING

When experiencing high anxiety, a flashback, tears, sleeplessness

- Acknowledge Your Feelings
- Try To Identify The Trigger
 - Scent, Sight, Sound
 - Leave The Situation, Take A Break
 - Tea, Deep Breathing, Take A Walk
 - Journal
 - Meditation App For Relaxation



FINDING & BALANCING FAMILY LIFE

- Significant time and energy is spent caring for your child
- Spend individual time with each of your children
- Schedule date nights
- Respite care – DDD, relative, friend, special needs babysitter
- Pay attention to the emotional needs of your other children – therapy; special needs sibling





FINDING & BALANCING FAMILY LIFE

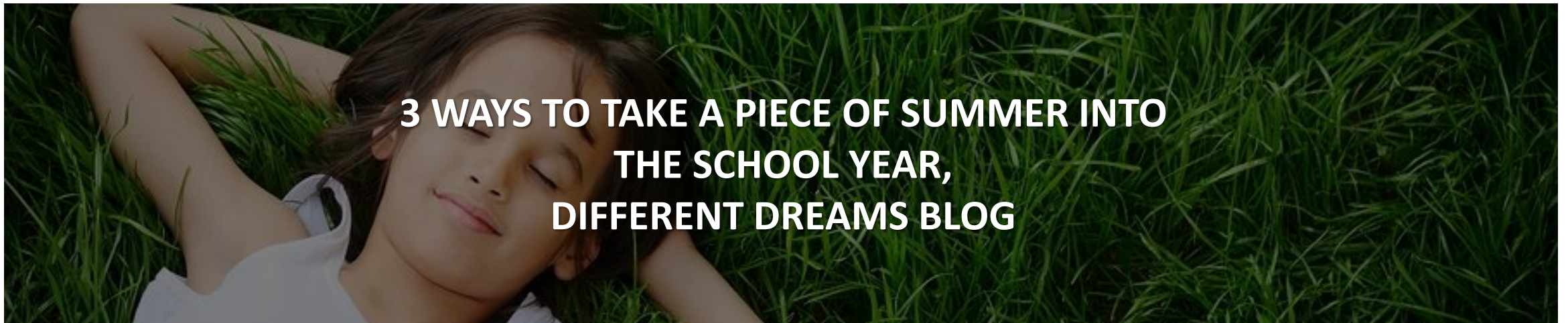
- **Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and other important milestones of other family members**
- **Set up family meetings**
- **Avoid too much responsibility on siblings**
- **Schedule time several times per week to speak with your spouse**
- **Praise and recognize each family member for what they contribute**

FINDING & BALANCING FAMILY LIFE

- Know your limits
- Develop a signal with your spouse or partner when you need to switch
- Build in down time into your family schedule



[READ THIS BLOG:](#)





WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

- Tired... all day, everyday but can't sleep
- Not able to maintain your roles in your life
- Poor focus and attention
- Low mood... everyday for most of the day
- Low interest in friendships

SUMMARY

A young boy with short brown hair is sitting in a wheelchair, blowing bubbles. He is wearing a light blue shirt and is holding a yellow bubble wand in his right hand and a pink sippy cup in his left hand. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage and a yellow diagonal shape in the top right corner. Several bubbles are floating in the air around him.

- Parenting a child with special needs can be very difficult
- A parent can be traumatized and suffer from PTSD
- Use coping tools everyday
- You can find family life balance
- It's okay to seek Professional Help



THANK YOU



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This presentation was brought to you in the interest of better health for you and the children you care for.

Please contact us if we can ever be of assistance.



Helpful Articles, Resources and Support

ShieldHealthCare.com/GROW

facebook.com/GROWwithShieldHealthCare

facebook.com/groups/TheDailyFeed



The background is a solid orange color. In the center, there is a bright, glowing sun with rays emanating from it. Two dark, silhouetted hands are positioned around the sun, with their fingers spread as if holding or supporting it. The overall composition is symmetrical and centered.

Shield HealthCare's Caregiver Contest

What advice would you give a fellow caregiver?

*Submit your entry of 150 words or more to
shieldhealthcare.com/caring*

Contest ends 1/31/18