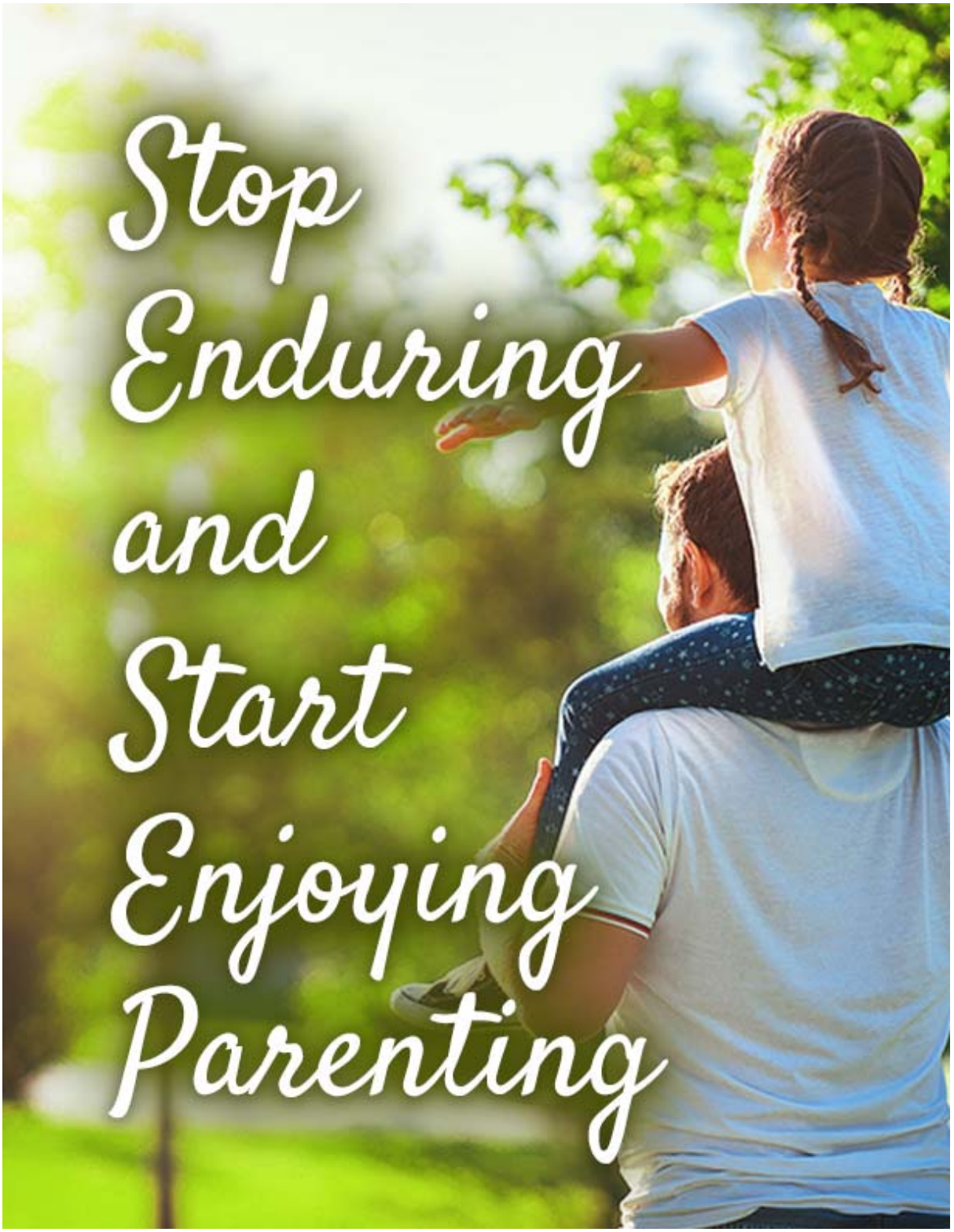

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Top ten tips for **enjoying and not just enduring** parenting children with ADHD

1. Put your own oxygen mask on first.

If you have low energy, low emotion or are stressed, you won't have any capacity to take that breath before reacting. This will happen when you are triggered or emotional by your child's behaviour. It's important to recognise these emotional times and how you feel so that you can take action before acting in a way *that* you will regret *afterward*. A simple action to lessen the emotion is to take a deep breath.

2. Choose your response mindfully rather than emotionally.

As a parent, it's our job to control our emotions, particularly when we are dealing with a child who has emotional dysregulation. This is possibly the most difficult behaviour to learn particularly if we have some emotion control deficit also. Take time to learn some strategies to give yourself that pause when you become emotional be it anger, frustration, sadness or hopelessness. A simple deep breath taken three times can create that pause.

3. Be curious, not judgmental.

If we can be curious about why our child is behaving or reacting to something, we can think about how to support them best at the time. If we judge their behaviour to be less or not good enough, we shame them and weaken their self-esteem. Take a moment when it is an undesirable behaviour to think about what is behind the behaviour and support them appropriately.

4. Learn to be proactive for potential challenges.

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When you learn what aspects or situations will trigger your child's negative behaviour, try to proactively head them off. This may mean letting things go and being more flexible. This has its own challenges, particularly if we are stressed or overcommitted. Try to build in extra time when there is a need to get things done in a timely manner. That way, if there is a bump, there is room to smooth it out.

5. Give all undesired behaviour the benefit of the doubt.

If you are not sure if your child is deliberately behaving badly or behaving as a result of his ADHD symptoms, give the behaviour the benefit of the doubt and assume that it is a result of ADHD. Check in to see if you are expecting your child to behave in a certain manner or control emotions that he does not have the skills for YET. We may make our child feel even worse than he already feels because he can't do it. Most children will try and do the right thing if they can but they may have skills that they have not developed yet.

6. Focus and talk about strengths – yours and your child's.

We all have strengths and we all have areas of weakness. Some are related to personality and some is because our brains are wired differently. Sometimes, expectations of family and school don't allow the strengths of your child to show early and unless you help them identify them, they may stay buried forever. Focus on strengths such as loyalty, creativity, empathy, energy, curiosity and if you can't think of any, look harder. Recognise your own strengths as a parent and utilise these to support your child.

7. Don't sweat the small stuff

If all interactions are negative, the relationship with your child will be eroded in time. Stop and think if it really, really worth fighting about. If it won't matter in ten years' time, let it go. An example is, will an untidy room in 10 years be important compared to learning how to manage emotions.

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8. Pick your battles for appropriate times.

If you are stressed or your child is stressed, it is not a good time to challenge behaviour or demand things that your child may not be able to do. Typically, at the end of the day, bedtime routines can be exhausting for us, the parent. Think about what you are asking your child (and yourself, to supervise it). Does your child really, really need that bath or could they go another day and it wouldn't really matter? Does your child have to tidy up before she goes to bed or could it be left until the morning when everyone has more energy?

9. Recognise that other people's opinions don't ultimately matter

but do try to educate when there is a lack of understanding about ADHD. Most people who judge are actually uneducated with regard to ADHD. It is an invisible disability so it is difficult to understand unless you are experiencing it yourself. Remind yourself that other people don't understand but if you get a chance, educate others about how ADHD impacts families.

10. If it gets too hard, ask for help

from a friend, a family member, a professional, a coach, a teacher or a support group. It's important to realise when it gets too overwhelming for you. Raising a child with ADHD is challenging so build a team so that you can ask for help when you need it.

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Get In Touch With Me Now

As an ADHD parent coach and a mum of a child with ADHD, I would love to support you on your parenting journey.

If you would like more information about any of these tips or any other aspect, please contact me.

Regards,

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