

Suffolk Region



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Gerri Coleman-Odom
Special Education Chair - Advocacy Team
ddccmmom@gmail.com
specialchair@suffolkpta.org

Special Education Report

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Happy New Year 2020! After the hustle and bustle of the 2019 holiday season, it is time to take a deep breath and begin the second half of the 2019-2020 school year.

This month, I would like to spend some time to talk about something that we exhibit towards our families, our friends, co-workers and fellow volunteers, but not always towards ourselves... compassion. After reading an article by the founder of Parenting Special Needs Magazine, Chantai Snellgrove, "Special Needs Parents: Stop being so hard on yourself", I realized that this article speaks to everyone.

In the article, she cites watching author, television writer and relationship expert Tracy McMillan, tell Oprah, that the lesson that took her the longest to learn was how to have compassion for herself. Ms. Snellgrove speaks about how as parents we think we are supposed to know things before it was possible to know them.

Being a parent we cannot know everything, we will make mistakes and errors, but we must not be hard on ourselves. Every child is a unique being and contrary to popular belief, children are not born with a manual in hand. "Our lives are continually unfolding, and new things are always happening, this is true for our children as well" So things don't go the way you expected, your children are not perfect, your life is turned upside down and you are dealing with so many obstacles, that you never imagined. Roll with it, rewrite your story, and make it work for you.

The article cites 3 practices that should be followed by everyone:

- 1) Treat yourself as you would a small child or good friend: If your child falls down and hurts themselves, you would kiss the booboo and make it all better. If your friend was having a bad day, you would provide words of encouragement and give a hug. Start treating yourself in the same manner and be kind to yourself.
- 2) Practice mindfulness: When you're overwhelmed with how much you have to do, how far you might have to go and how hard you have to fight, when you're beating yourself up with harsh words : "I'm a failure, I'm never going to be able to do this"- STOP, breathe and change your thoughts and adopt a new attitude. Ms. Snellgrove quotes the late author and poet Maya Angelou "*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.*"
- 3) Remember that you are not alone: Know that you are not alone. According to the article there are over 7 million other humans who are raising a child with special needs and are experiencing this journey. Once we realize that we are not alone, we will begin to feel more connected to others in the sense that we are in this together, Psychotherapist and wellness coach Megan Bruneau states, 'so many of us think we're broken or screwing up, when in actuality, we're all fumbling our way through a script-less experience together'.

So let us begin 2020 with a new mindset... to have compassion for ourselves. Know that no matter how little the progress is, you are making progress and when doubts begin to creep into your thoughts, know that you are doing the best you can, all the rest will come.

