

How to Raise Strong Girls (and Boys)

SUMMIT CLINICIANS

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THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS have been difficult for most of us to navigate. We are dealing with changes to all areas of our lives, including school settings, family relationships, and social interactions. In addition to news about the pandemic, current events identify specific obstacles for women, including inequality in different environments, sexual assault, and different perspectives on reproductive health. With the challenges of the world around us, how do we help to build strong, capable little humans? How do we support girls (and boys and non-binary children) to stand up for themselves in positive, affirmative ways?

helpful for our children when they experience how it feels to earn a consequence. Experiencing this in a safe environment may help them develop an awareness of their actions, hopefully setting the ground work for children to take responsibility for their behaviors and make positive, thoughtful decisions.

five minutes to focus on each of your children and what they want to share about their lives. Setting up special time for your children shows them that they are worthy of people's attention; it also helps you to stay current on how they may be feeling or behaving.

■ Give them a role model (or several role models).

Representation in our world is important. And by representation, I mean, role models that represent important parts of you or your children. It could mean your race, your gender identity, your religion, or your values. Finding people who demonstrate what is important to you can help children to relate and identify with someone in a positive way. The role model can be famous or family, in the real world or in the play world, as long as this provides a positive example to your child and your family.



■ Give them responsibilities.

Find age-appropriate tasks for your children and hold them accountable. The difficulty could range from small tasks, such as putting their laundry in their hamper, to bigger tasks, such as washing their own laundry, folding it and putting it away once a week. Build the responsibilities up as your children get older to allow them to build independence, as well as self-efficacy.

■ Give them consequences.

As a parent, it is easy to make rules and guidelines for your children, but then not follow through with the plan. However, it is most

■ Give them a voice.

Take the time to listen to their concerns, their complaints, and their ideas. It is important to set up an environment that teaches children that their voice is being heard. This does not mean that as a parent, you must always give them what they want; it means that you are able to have discussions and modify family rules in a constructive way together, when it seems appropriate.

■ Give them your time.

Designate time each week to check in with your children alone; hopefully, even the busiest schedules can find

■ Give them love.

Our children need to see, hear, feel and know our love. Having a strong foundation of unconditional love helps them to take healthy risks with confidence in themselves. It helps them to have a place to rely on for support if needed. It teaches them to expect love and support within important relationships, and most importantly, it teaches them to love themselves. ■

Dr. Danielle Romano is a licensed clinical psychologist who enjoys working with children, adolescents, and young adults on finding positive ways to be strong, independent, and happy.



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Q&A

Q ADHD in Girls and Women What is ADHD?

A Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a psychiatric illness that is marked by difficulty focusing and sometimes includes problems with restlessness or impulsivity.

Q How do the symptoms and prevalence of ADHD differ between men and women?

A Females are more likely to present with only ADHD's more subtle symptoms, like difficulty maintaining attention or feeling bored, while males are more likely to experience impulsivity or hyperactivity along with problems with focus. Males are twice as likely to carry a diagnosis of ADHD, but many clinicians believe this is due to the underdiagnosis of ADHD in females. Unlike the internal symptoms in females that may go unnoticed, impulsive or hyperactive behaviors in males often bothers parents, spouses, or teachers, who encourage them to seek a diagnosis.

Q What is unique about treating ADHD in women?

A Changes in mood and focus around menses, safety of medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding, or changes in cognitive functioning during menopause may need to be considered in treatment for a woman with ADHD. ■

Dr. Rebecca Durkin is an Adult Psychiatrist that likes working with a variety of patients, especially emerging adults (ages 18-25) and patients with mood disorders.

Smashing Working Mom Guilt

AS A WORKING MOM OF THREE young children, I often struggle with working mom guilt. It hits the hardest when you feel that you miss "the firsts" in your kids' lives, when you cannot be there with your sick child, when your own child calls your nanny "mommy," or when another mom says to you that she could never be away from the kids for so long.

Mom guilt is very normal and common for working and stay-at-home moms as we tend to compare ourselves to others. The shame may come from feeling like you don't spend enough time with your family. I often remind myself that my career provides me with financial security, social interactions and the feeling that I am making a difference in other people's lives. The matter of fact is that I enjoy what I do, and getting out of the house provides me with much needed time to take my mom hat off for a bit, and to focus on

another part of my identity outside of motherhood. When employment outside of the house is a financial necessity for the family, rather than a career choice, concentrating on other benefits for the family is a must.

This working mom guilt eats away at you, disrupts your sleep, affects your mood, and gets in the way of being present. Here are some tips to smash working mother guilt:

- *Validate what you are feeling; it is completely normal.*
- *Concentrate on the positives: our kids become more independent and develop other relationships when cared for by others.*
- *Be grateful for what you have, not for what's missing.*
- *Embrace what you love about working.*
- *Accept that you cannot do it all, delegate if possible.*

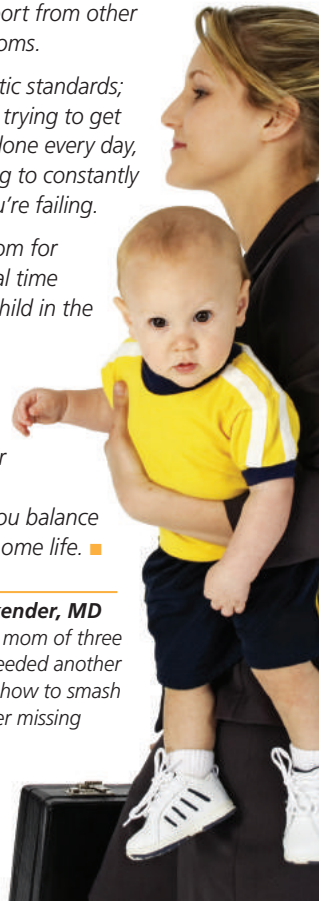
■ *Get support from other working moms.*

■ *Set realistic standards; if you keep trying to get too much done every day, you're going to constantly feel like you're failing.*

■ *Make room for extra special time with your child in the evening or weekends; this can help you refresh your outlook on how well you balance work and home life.* ■

Anna Mackender, MD

is a working mom of three girls, who needed another reminder of how to smash the guilt after missing another bedtime.



Understanding PMDD

PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER (PMDD) is a much more severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). An estimated 30-80% of women of childbearing age have some PMS problems while PMDD affects 3-8 percent of women in this age group. Symptoms of PMDD appear during the week before menstruation and typically end within a few days after onset of menstruation.

Five or more of the following symptoms must be present during most menstrual cycles to be diagnosed with PMDD: depressed mood, anger or irritability, trouble concentrating, lack of enjoyment, increased appetite, insomnia or sleeping too much, feeling out of control, as well as physical symptoms such as bloating, breast tenderness or headaches.

There is no specific testing for PMDD, except for ruling out other medical problems (such as

depression, thyroid abnormalities, menopause/perimenopause or fibroids). Tracking symptoms on a monthly basis may be helpful to see cyclical patterns (period-tracking apps and calendars are very useful).

Exact cause of PMDD is unknown, but decreasing levels of estrogen and progesterone hormones after ovulation and before menstruation may be responsible for the symptoms. Also changing serotonin levels through the menstrual cycle may play a role. Stressful life events and a family history of PMS or PMDD may increase your chances of getting PMDD. Major depressive disorder is common in women who have PMDD, however not all women who have PMDD have major depression.

Symptoms of PMDD often disrupt home, social and work functioning due to their chronic nature. Improving diet (limiting carbohydrates, salt, alcohol and

caffeine), regular exercise and improved stress management may be helpful lifestyle changes. Psychotherapy may also lead to reduction in neurobiological stress responses and improved coping of symptoms. Treatment may also include vitamin supplements (magnesium, calcium and vitamin B6), anti-inflammatory medications, hormonal medications (such as oral birth control pills) or antidepressants (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors [SSRI] or selective norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors [SNRI]). Some find that taking the same dose of SSRIs every day helps, while others increase their dose during the week or two leading up to their period. For women without a pre-existing history of depression and anxiety, taking antidepressants only for 1-2 weeks prior to onset of menstruation is another option. ■

Dr. Anna Mackender enjoys working with women of various ages and is a certified Perinatal Mental Health psychiatrist.

