



### Parenting with Emotional Challenges

Being a parent is challenging, and can be even tougher when you're dealing with PTSD or other mental health concerns. Here are some tips to consider:

- Children respond to mental health concerns in the family in a variety of ways.
  - Find ways to talk with them about it.
  - Do your homework. Do some reading, talk with your doctor or trusted friends, or check out some of the helpful resources.
- At some level, your children can sense you're struggling with something. It's important to TALK about it (at a level appropriate for your children!).
  - Realize this will not be a one-shot conversation. Rather, it's important for you to regularly open the discussion, encouraging your children to ask questions and share feelings as they arise.
  - Tell your children that that they are not to blame – they didn't do anything wrong!
  - Encourage your children's open and honest expression of worries, feelings, and questions.
- Work to keep a strong relationship with your children through regular special time, consistent family routines and rituals.
- Everyone has tough days, mental health issues or not! There are many things you can do to help yourself get through the rough patches.
  - If appropriate, make time for regular physical exercise. Physical exercise is the very best technique for managing your stress.
  - Eat a balanced diet and try to get adequate sleep (7-8 hours per night).
  - Work to create some alone time every day.
  - Connect with supportive friends and family members.
  - Go into another room for a few minutes to calm down.
  - Take a walk or a jog.
  - Take several deep breaths.
  - Schedule a pleasant activity (for you alone or with your partner or friend).
- One of the BEST things you can do for your children is to get help for yourself when you need it! Not only are you improving your wellbeing, you're being a good role model in asking for help.
  - It takes courage to ask for help, and we honor that. However, we encourage you to ask for help EARLY...before you feel overwhelmed by life's challenges. It's much easier to get back on the "right" path when your difficulties are small than when they've spun out of control.