

## Workshop 2

**‘Empowering early childhood: fostering the wellbeing of children and their caregivers’**

**‘Burnout Prevention Techniques in ECI:  
From Parental Burnout to Parental Wellbeing’**

Moderator

**Martin Mňahončák, TENENET**

Speaker

**Vicky Krokou, AMIMONI**

# The Challenges of Parenting Children with Disabilities

Raising a child with a disability can be a profound and rewarding experience, yet it also presents unique challenges that can impact the entire family. Parents encounter major difficulties which may have a detrimental effect on their mental health and wellbeing, deplete their own resources, and even lead to parental burnout.



# Integrating Burnout Prevention into Early Childhood Intervention Programs

## Family-Centered Approach

Respect for the family's choices and decision-making processes are encouraged and emphasis is given on increasing the knowledge, skills and competences of the family so that they can mobilize all their resources.

## Training and Support

Equip staff with tools and resources to help parents manage stress and maintain wellbeing.

## Collaborative Approach

Foster a culture of open communication and mutual support among professionals and families.

**By respecting the family's choices and decision-making processes, providing support and training for staff, and cultivating a collaborative, empathetic environment, ECI programs can empower parents to take care of their children while maintaining their own wellbeing.**

# Parental Burnout Did you know?

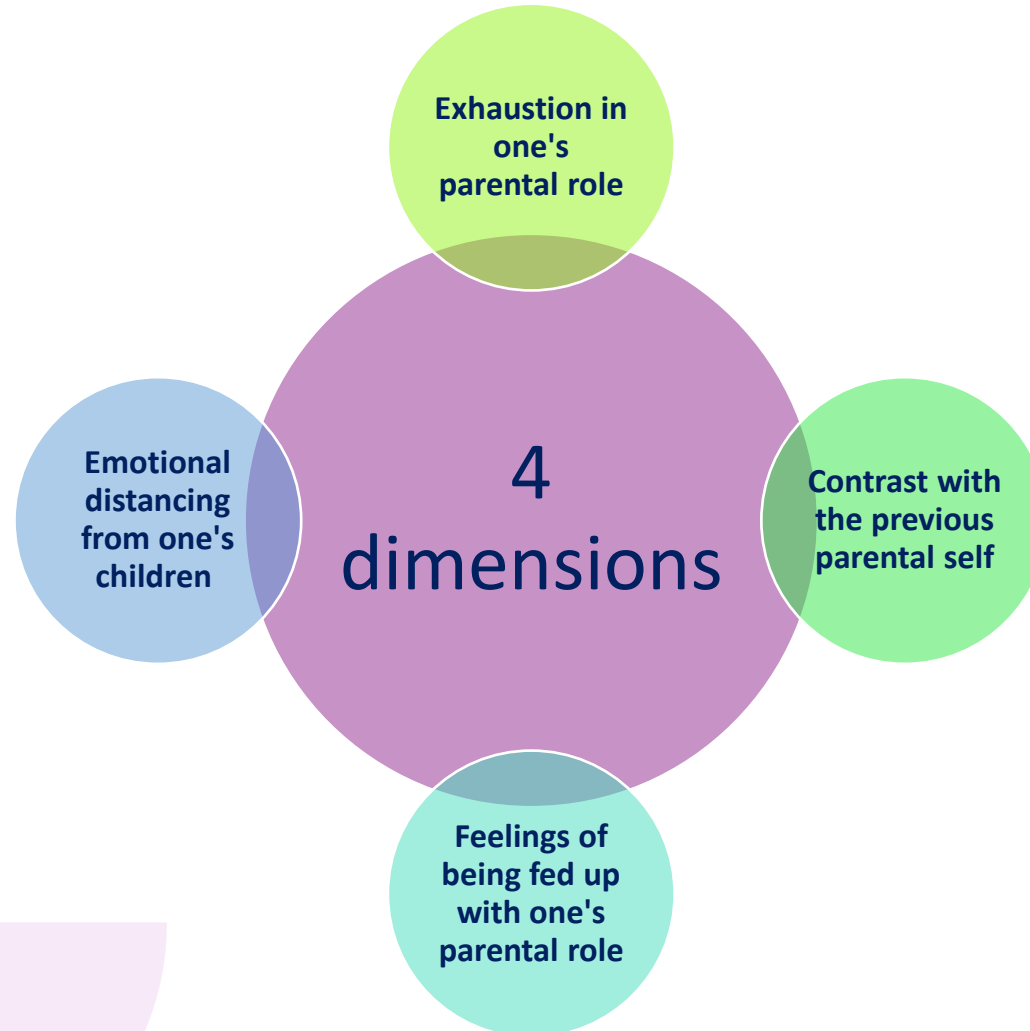
The findings suggest that at least 5% of parents worldwide have burnout, while the percentage in some countries reaches 8% (Roskam et al., 2021).

Studies have also highlighted the increased risk of burnout among parents caring for a child with a disability (Aktan, Orakçı, & Durnalı, 2020).

Study in 17,409 parents (12,364 mothers and 5,045 fathers) from 42 countries around the world discovered that burnout varied drastically by country, based on the differences in Eastern and Western cultural values (Roskam et al., 2021).



# Understanding Parental Burnout



# Causes of Parental Burnout

Relentless caregiving demands for a child with a disability, leaving little or no time for self-care.

Lack of practical and emotional support from family, friends, or the healthcare system.

Chronic stress from navigating complex medical, educational, and bureaucratic systems.

Feelings of stigma and isolation.

Financial strain and loss of income due to reduced work hours or leaving the workforce.



# Recognizing the Signs of Burnout

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Recognizing the early warning signs of burnout is crucial for parents of children with disabilities. These may include **chronic fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, detachment from family, and a sense of hopelessness or loss of purpose.**

Physical symptoms like **headaches, muscle tension, and changes in appetite or sleep patterns** can also indicate the need for intervention and self-care.



# The Impact of Parental Burnout

## Impaired Parenting

Reduced ability to provide nurturing care and emotional support

## Strained Family Relationships

Increased conflict, disconnection, and difficulty bonding

## Compromised Child Well-Being

Negative impact on the child's physical, emotional, and developmental progress

Parental burnout can have far-reaching consequences, profoundly impacting the entire family dynamic. Exhausted and emotionally depleted parents may struggle to provide the attentive, responsive care their child with disabilities requires, leading to strained relationships and compromised child wellbeing. Addressing burnout is crucial to ensure that the whole family thrives.



**ACTIVITY 1: MENTIMETER**  
“IDEAS ON HOW TO PREVENT PARENTAL  
BURNOUT AND PROMOTE  
PARENTAL WELLBEING”



# SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO PREVENT PARENTAL BURNOUT AND PROMOTE PARENTAL WELLBEING



# Accessing Support Services and Resources

The ECI professionals can encourage parents to:

Connect with local disability organizations to find resources and support.

Explore online communities and forums to share experiences and learn from other parents in similar situations.

Utilize government and nonprofit programs that offer financial assistance, respite care, and other services for families with children with disabilities.

# Encouraging Peer-to-Peer ECI Support Groups

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Create support groups where parents can connect, share experiences, and offer mutual understanding and advice.

Organize regular meet-ups, both in-person and online to foster a sense of community and reduce feelings of isolation.

Encourage experienced parents to mentor and guide newcomers, providing emotional support and practical tips for navigating the challenges of early intervention.

ECI support groups expand social networks, reduce stress, lessen feelings of stigma and isolation, and boost coping strategies and self-esteem through shared experiences and mutual assistance.

# Seeking Professional Help When Needed

## Recognize the Need

- Identify when parents' coping strategies are no longer effective and specialized professional support is required.

## Seek Out Therapists

- Research and connect with mental health professionals who specialize in supporting parents of children with disabilities.

## Explore Counseling

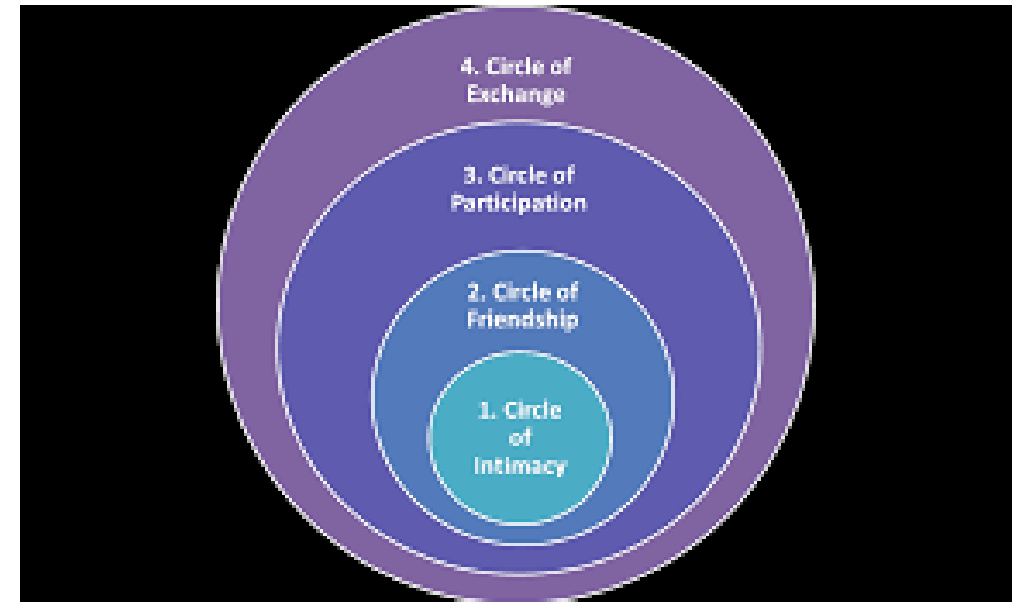
- Engage in individual or family counseling to work through the emotional challenges and develop effective coping mechanisms.



## A very useful activity: 'Circle Of Support'

**General Aim:** Emphasize the importance of caring for one another within families and communities.

➤ The parents can identify the persons who are significant to them and can support them and actively foster and maintain these connections.



**ACTIVITY 2: MENTIMETER**  
“What makes us happy in life?”



# Harvard Research Reveals The #1 Key To Living Longer And Happier

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In 1938, Harvard researchers embarked on a decades-long study to find out:  
**What makes us happy in life?**

For more than 80 years, researchers have tracked the lives of people as part of this study. The project has followed participants from adolescence into old age, collecting data on their physical and mental health, jobs, relationships, and more.

The **#1 insight** from the Harvard study is that close relationships and social connections are crucial for our wellbeing. People with more strong social connections showed lower rates of diabetes, arthritis, cognitive decline, and other chronic conditions.

Having supportive and nurturing relationships is a buffer against life's stresses and protects overall health. **Good relationships "keep us healthier and happier."**





# Maintaining a Healthy Family Dynamic

## Quality Time Together

Make family mealtimes, game nights, and other shared activities a priority to strengthen bonds and create cherished memories.

## Inclusive Activities

Involve the child with a disability in family hobbies and events, adapting as needed to ensure their participation and sense of belonging.

## Sibling Relationships

Foster positive sibling relationships by encouraging understanding, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving within the family.

## Couple's Time

Make time regularly to spend as a couple to strengthen your relationship and recharge, which will benefit the whole family.

# Prioritizing Self-Care: Strategies for Managing Stress and Anxiety

## Mindfulness Practices

- Engage in meditation, deep breathing, and other mindfulness techniques to manage stress and cultivate inner calm.

## Physical Wellness

- Prioritize physical activity, healthy nutrition, and adequate sleep to maintain energy and resilience.

## Journaling and Expressing Gratitude

- Documenting thoughts, feelings and experiences and practicing gratitude can be a therapeutic way to process emotions and gain clarity during challenging times.

## Nurture Interests

- Rediscover personal hobbies and passions to foster a sense of identity beyond the caregiver role.

## Spend time in Nature

- Spend time outdoors, whether it's a short walk or sitting in a peaceful garden, to connect with nature.

# From Parental Burnout to Parental Well-Being in ECI

## Key Take-Aways

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### **Prioritizing Self-Care!**

Parents need to take care of themselves!

When they are not doing well mentally and physically, they are not their best selves for their family and especially their children.

### **Nurture/Cultivate Relationships!**

People who are more connected to family, to friends, and to community, are happier and physically healthier than people who are less well connected.

**‘The biggest gift parents can give to their children is their own happiness, the parents’ own happiness. Because if the parents are happy, then the children think, it is because of them since the children take everything personally. If the parents are unhappy, the child thinks “I’m not good enough.” Parents need to look at their own lives and their relationships and how they feel about themselves, then they can meet the child’s needs’.**

**Dr Gabor Maté**



## **Burnout FREE ECI Project**



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**Website:** <https://www.burnoutfree.eu/THE-PROJECT>





# Guaranteeing **Choice & Control**

Transforming Mental Health and Psychosocial Disability Support

