

Uniquely Us
Gracefully Navigating the Maze of
Neurodiverse Marriage
Autism Faith Marriage
Chapter 10:
Navigating the Maze of Co-Parenting
and Teamwork

Chapter 10

How a Neurodivergent Couple Parents Neurodivergent Children

Getting to the point of accepting that there is a need to have a child evaluated for autism

Parental resistance and acceptance

Caregiver input

Trusted friend/advisor input

Evaluation by an autism-knowledgeable professional

A diagnosis of autism means your child is **different** *not bad*

Chapter 10

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Processing the Autism Diagnosis

It is ok to grieve for what you think your child may miss, and also learn about your child, and figure out how to meet them where they are at

Changing expectations

Sometimes, this journey can lead a parent to recognize similar traits in themselves and/or their spouse

Later in life autism diagnosis

Recognizing our child's autistic traits frees us to identify how to more appropriately meet our autistic child's needs

Strategies based on NT children *will NOT work* for the autistic child without significant modification to accommodate their autistic traits

Chapter 10

How a Neurodivergent Couple Parents Neurodivergent Children

Direction for parenting ND children:

For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law

(Galatians 5:22-23 ESV).

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Chapter 10

Parenting in Love The goal is to ensure that our children feel love

Make sure they feel that we enjoy them

Make sure they feel our deep affection for them

This will likely mean we need to learn to do things on their terms

NASCAR or Legos?

Singing in a loud voice

Hugging or not?

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent your kids with love, and what are some ways you haven't tried, but should consider?
2. What mindset shift do you need to make about parenting in love?

Chapter 10

Parenting in Joy The goal is that our children feel the joy (great pleasure and happiness) they bring to us

Be intentional about how your tone of voice and body language reflect joy to them

Demonstrate joy through action

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you can parent with joy and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. Is your home low joy or high joy?
3. Are you as a parent approachable? (Refer back to the neuroplasticity chapter for a refresher on relational joy).

Chapter 10

Parenting in Peace

This can be difficult when our children have traits that conflict with our concept of peace

Self Regulation

Be curious about those ‘non-peaceful’ behaviors

Find ways to help your child regulate

Special playlist?

White noise/background noise?

Something else?

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with peace and what are some ways you haven’t tried but should consider?
2. Peace is about shalom in the home. Dr. Wilder and others who have written about joy and shalom share that both joy and shalom and interactive quieting are essential to relationship building. Do you know how to quiet yourself?
3. Do you know how to bring peace to a challenging situation?

Chapter 10

Parenting in Patience: This means growing our capacity to tolerate trouble or delays without getting angry or upset

Try to avoid acting on your assumptions (mind reading) and/or jumping to conclusions, or emotional reactions

Remember that these are all struggles for our children as well

Beware your expectations...

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with patience and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. Do you have work to do in cultivating your patience?
3. Part of parenting with patience is learning to be patient with yourself as you learn new skills, patience with your parenting partner, and patience with your children.

Chapter 10

Parenting in Kindness Being friendly, generous, and considerate to them and having compassion for them

Kindness also contains an empathy component-we need to understand where children are coming from to show them kindness

This can be a particular challenge to the AS/ND due to challenges with Theory of Mind

AS/ND theory of mind can be improved through hard work

Curiosity can help-instead of assuming ask ‘Why did they do or say that?’

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with kindness and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. Are you open to hearing from your children about what kindness looks and feels like to them?
3. Sometimes doing the hard thing is the kind thing, but your approach, tone and method should reflect loving kindness.

Chapter 10

Parenting in Goodness This means a morally good and virtuous foundation rooted in lived out examples from the parents

This may require helping the AS/ND child see or understand how their words/actions can affect others and finding ways to help them avoid negative impacts

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with goodness and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. In your anger or frustration do you withhold goodness or the best of yourself?
3. While discipline may require consequences, do you discipline in a way your child feels and believes Heseb from you?

(Reminder: Heseb is an attachment that indicates you are for someone's good, and they can rely on you to do what is good and right on their behalf out of goodness and loving kindness).

Chapter 10

Parenting in Faithfulness This is doing what you say you will do (Let your yes be yes and your no be no...)

The more your children can learn to trust in your faithfulness, the more they're going to be open to trusting God's faithfulness

It's hard sometimes to stick to exactly what we said, but it's important for us to show them consistency

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with faithfulness and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. You are probably seeing a theme from the previous chapter that aligns with Dr. Wilder's materials. The fruit of the spirit works together in cultivating the four soils of joy, hesed, group identity, and healthy correction.
3. Do you model faithfulness by keeping your word and following through?

Chapter 10

Parenting in Gentleness Learn your autistic child's boundaries and tolerances instead of trying to get them to conform to what we want them to be

Learning about autism and understanding the challenges faced by an autistic child in the NA/NT world can increase our capacity for gentleness

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with gentleness and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. Sometimes what may seem gentle to you may not be gentle to others. Are you open to feedback if you desire to work on gentleness?

Chapter 10

Parenting in Self-Control This is acting out of our best self and avoiding reactions out of a dysregulated state

We can all be dysregulated (even the NA/NTs among us)

We need to do what it takes to remain regulated when in parenting situations

Breathing, prayer, meditation, a short break-whatever works for you

Questions and Tips

1. What are some ways you parent with self-control and what are some ways you haven't tried but should consider?
2. The book *Emotional Intelligence in Christ* states that self-control is the anchor to all the other fruits of the spirit. If you struggle with self-control and regulation, we have made the point in a previous chapter that being intentional in pre-regulation is critical. Both parents need to be regulated and operate in self-control so that your parenting can more accurately reflect our loving, heavenly Father