


3 Reasons Why I Told My Kids I'm in Therapy

 Stephanie in Scotch Plains, NJ
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By letting my children see this part of me, I'm being a role model of what good emotional and mental health looks like.



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I'm in therapy. I'm approaching 43 and I've been in therapy for the better part of my adult life. In my younger years, I was ashamed of it -- embarrassed to admit to friends and family that I needed help when it came to managing my emotions. I believed that this was an "abnormal" part of me, something that made me weak.

Then I realized I had it all wrong.

Now that I'm older and wiser, I have a very different perspective on the matter. Today, I see it as a sign of bravery and strength.

Yes, I am in therapy -- and not only am I NOT ashamed to admit it to my kids, but I'm actually proud of it. By letting my children see this part of me, I know that I'm setting a positive example for them.

Here are the three main reasons why I told my kids I'm in therapy -- and the three big things I want them to learn from my personal experiences:

1) Asking for Help Is a Sign of Strength, Not Weakness

I recently came across this quote by motivational speaker [Leslie Brown](#): "Ask for help not because you're weak, but because you want to remain strong."

As a mother, I want to be strong for my children, so that I can support them, guide them and set the right example for them. But I'm also evolved enough to know that being strong doesn't mean I come without my own share of weaknesses. I know what my challenges are. I know what I can and can't do on my own, and I know when it's time to call for reinforcements.

I speak to a therapist because I need help sorting through the myriad of thoughts and feelings that run through my active brain. It's just how I'm wired and I recognize this about myself. But that's me, and that's my struggle. Everyone runs into their own share of struggles; we all need help in some areas of our life at one time or another.

So, if that's the case, why is it so hard to ask for help?

Maybe it's because we think that we should be able to do it on our own. Maybe it's because we feel embarrassed to admit that we need help. Maybe it's because we think that no one else is struggling with something because we can't see those struggles -- so if no one else is asking for help, why should we?

Whatever the reasoning is, it's not the message that I want my children to receive. I want them to internalize what I already know to be true: asking for help is a sign of strength and of courage, not of weakness.

2) Talking About Our Emotions Is Healthy

As the mother of boys, I am all too aware of the stigma associated with showing emotion -- particularly when it comes to male gender identity. But I also know that burying your emotions can have detrimental and long-term effects, too. In fact, research has shown that if people don't learn how to deal with their emotions early on, it can lead to all sorts of psychosocial issues later in life like anxiety and depression, along with work and relationship-related problems.

Children begin developing emotional skills the day they're born, and they learn by watching and interacting with others. So, as their parents, it's up to us to teach them -- from the very beginning -- that talking about their emotions is healthy, not weak.

But how?

Well, there are a lot of things we can do. We can encourage our children to talk to us and share what's going on in their heads. We can help them identify what they're feeling and how to process it. And, most importantly, we can model this behavior for them by showing them how we manage our own emotional health.

My openness about the fact that I speak to a therapist about my feelings, emotions and struggles shows my children that I practice what I preach -- and that this practice is an important one, regardless of age.

3) We Are All Works In Progress -- No One Is Perfect

Children make mistakes. They mess up, they get in trouble, they learn from it (hopefully) and move on. It's expected of them. The problem is that our kids usually don't realize that adults make mistakes, too. They seem to believe that we are infallible creatures who never mess up or make a bad decision; we are the standard that they should be living up to. And I think that it's this belief that makes them afraid to come to us when they make their own mistakes.

But, the fact of the matter is that we're all growing. Sure, they're the ones growing in size, but we're all growing within ourselves. We're all human and we all make mistakes.

I'm always trying to create an open and supportive environment that helps my boys feel like they can come to me with their setbacks. Thus far, I've been successful in achieving this goal, as I've always made it clear that just like them, I also have room to grow, too.

So, when one of my kids recently asked me why I see a therapist, I very simply said: "Because I, too, am a work in progress -- and this is how I make myself better."


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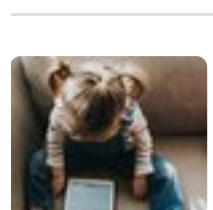
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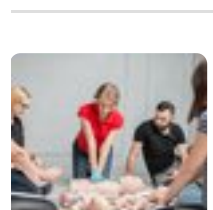
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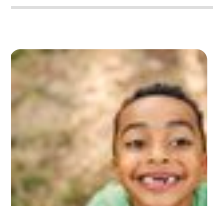
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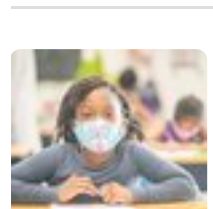
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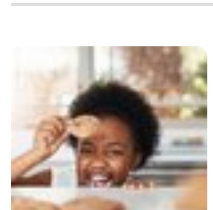
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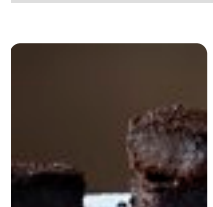
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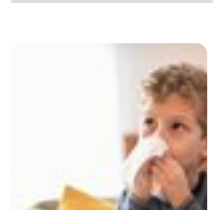
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