

**Recovery from Hazardous Parenting**



A Healing Workshop  
Created and presented by  
Brenda McCreight Ph.D.

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**Hazardous**  
 1. involving great risk  
 2. depending on chance  
 Collins English Dictionary -- Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003  
 The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

**Behavior disorder**  
 •Any of a group of antisocial behavior patterns occurring primarily in children and adolescents, such as over  
 • aggressiveness, over activity, destructiveness, cruelty, truancy, lying, disobedience, perverse sexual activity, criminality, alcoholism, and drug addiction.  
 Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 8th edition. © 2009, Elsevier.

**Recovery**  
 1. the act or process of recovering, especially from sickness, a shock, or a setback; recuperation  
 2. restoration to a former or better condition  
 3. the regaining of something lost  
 Collins English Dictionary -- Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003  
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Hazardous Parenting describes the experience of raising children who, despite their many positive qualities, also demonstrate most or all of the following behaviours:

- chronic lying
- chronic stealing
- chronic intimidation, aggression and violence towards other children, animals, and/or adults
- appear to lack a conscience
- chronic non-compliance in all settings
- inability to feel empathy
- chronically self centered, narcissistic
- purposefully destructive




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Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)  
Attachment Disorder (AD)  
Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)  
Conduct Disorder (CD)  
 Chronic depression/mood disorders  
 Bipolar Disorder  
Eating Disorders  
Schizophrenia  
 Schizo-affective disorder  
Substance abuse/addiction  
 Chronic rages  
 Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (fasd)  
 Neurodevelopmental challenges resulting from  
 early neglect and/or abuse



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**LOSS**  
 Parents of children with behavioral challenges typically experience multiple losses throughout their child raising years. Some are subtle and not noticed till later, others are more obvious and are recognized as soon as they are gone.



i haven't lost anything,  
 except my mind

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- What did you lose?



**Make your own list!**

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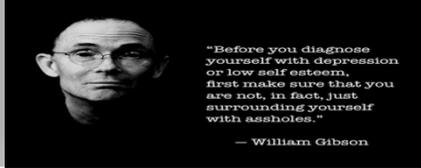
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**Your SELF-ESTEEM!**

- No matter which rung you started out on with the self esteem ladder, it's likely that you slipped down a few while you were engaged in Hazardous Parenting. The years of feeling like a failure as a parent and the years of being the target of your child's anger and even violence will eventually erode the self esteem of even the most confident person.




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**NEUROBIOLOGY OF DEPRESSION**

- According to researchers, there appear to be structural and functional changes in several areas of the brain, including the following:
- the prefrontal cortex – which controls decision making, planning, predicting consequences, self monitoring and regulating of behaviour, judging right from wrong
- the amygdala – which processes primary emotions such as fear, anger, and pleasure and are particularly concerned with our survival
- the hippocampus,- which stores short term memory and processes it to long term memory and therefore learning, as well as spatial navigation.
- These areas react to depression by becoming less functional and therefore the cognitive processes of the person with depression are reduced. The longer the depression lasts, the worse these areas functions.




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**NEUROBIOLOGY of ANXIETY**

- The amygdala is the alarm bell within the limbic system and it processes sensory information about potential danger even before the person is consciously aware of a risk or threat. When life is smooth, the cerebral cortex and the hippocampus share the task of putting information in context and overriding the alarm when they've determined that no real threat exists.
- Unfortunately, after years of chronic stress and worry from Hazardous Parenting, or from other traumas, or neglect, or poor attachment, the amygdala is on high alert and is overly sensitive so it overreacts to most incoming information and the person becomes anxious about life in general.
- Researchers have also found that the hippocampus atrophies from chronic stress, so the person becomes even less able to override the alarm response.



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**NEUROBIOLOGY of STRESS**

The impact of stress on the neurobiology of the brain is huge and very negative. When you experience stress from a perceived threat the nervous system responds by releasing a flood of the major stress hormones, which are adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones immediately get the body set up for emergency action. The heart beats more quickly, the muscles tense, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and senses become sharper. These physical changes increase strength, stamina, speed, and reaction time, as well as create an enhanced ability to focus.

The brain feels overwhelmed by all of this, and in turn, it over activates the limbic system and creates the following cognitive problems:

- Information that is coming in from the external world is misunderstood or misinterpreted
- The brain gets in the habit of looking for trouble
- This makes all events, feelings, relationships, tasks, etc seem too important, too imminent, too frightening, too threatening, too difficult, and unrecoverable.



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**• Co-Dependence**

**Suppression of your own needs:** the parents suppress their own needs for fun, sleep, leisure, exercise, relationships, etc because they constantly seek to meet and support their child's needs.

**Need to control:** parents need to control a great deal in their child's life in order to prevent problems and to obtain services. As a result, others begin to see them as controlling. In some situations, the parent generalizes the need to control to other people or other areas of life where the same degree of control is not needed.



codependent bear

has to learn to let go

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**Denial:** parents may begin to deny the impact that the acting out behaviours of the child or youth have on other members of the family and on the loss of healthy relationships. Many parents also have trouble accepting that they have become a very dysfunctional family because the needs or behaviors of one are always more important than the needs of any other family member.

**Poor Boundaries:** lack of boundaries may be one of the symptoms of the child's behaviour disorder, and over time, the parents begin to take on that same lack of boundaries. They may become over involved in every relationship in their home as they try to prevent more problems.

**Triangulation:** the primary parent takes over the role of communicator between the child and everyone else – other family members, teachers, police, counsellors or anyone has a problem with the child. Over time, they begin to circumvent direct communication about the problem with the child or youth and seek the parent first.



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**Extreme care giving:** over time the parent begins to take on the responsibility for all of the behaviours and needs of the acting out child or youth. The parent feels guilty when the violent youth hurts someone; or, the parent feels like a failure when she or he can't find the "right" therapy or can't afford the "best" therapist for his or her child. The parent learns to anticipate or predict all of the needs and moods of the child or youth and focuses his days on proactive steps to prevent melt downs or consequences at the expense of himself and other family members.



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**Rigid thinking:** the parent develops a perspective and belief about the condition and how best to manage it. This serves to protect the child as well as support him, but it can result in the parent closing off to other people's suggestions or views and not recognizing when other perspectives are valid or helpful.



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**Recovery from loss and grief**

- William Shakespeare had MacBeth say:  
"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the o'er-wrought heart and bids it break."



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- **Seek a place outside of yourself and your family to \*give your sorrow words\***
- **You don't have to write down or talk about the past incidents in detail**
- **Let go of the emotional responsibility for your young adult**
- **Re-train your brain:** stop the compulsive thinking about what is happening with your son or daughter and focus on you and your needs
- **Acknowledge that you are sad that things didn't turn out the way you had planned and hoped**



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**• SELF ESTEEM RECOVERY**

Others see us through the lens that we color and shape so if we don't like ourselves, others will find fault as well. For the years that you were actively raising your acting out child, you likely heard lots about what a failure you were as a parent and ultimately, as a person.



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- What can you do to reclaim and rebuild your self esteem as a parent? As a person? As a loving partner? As a friend?

**Make your own list.**

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**Here are my suggestions:**

- Set personal boundaries
- Spend time with your other children
- Make a list of your accomplishments
- Try something new
- Set the bar lower
- Get a really good haircut and maintain it
- Exercise
- Jettison the baggage



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- Spend time with friends
- Make friends
- Keep your bedroom clean
- Throw out your old clothes – declutter
- Get a pet that you like
- Act as if you have high self-esteem



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**• DEPRESSION RECOVERY**

• Depression saps your energy and so the steps needed to recover from it can seem overwhelming which can lead to more severe depression. You don't have to be trapped in this cycle. Begin by taking very small steps. Look at your life and decide on one single change. Can you walk up a set of stairs at your doctor's office instead of taking the elevator? Can you go to bed earlier each night to get enough sleep? Can you stop eating carbohydrate snacks after dinner and replace them with a cup of decaffeinated tea? If you can't do any of this now, don't worry, you have lots of time to begin your recovery.



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**• Here are some suggestions for your recovery from depression:**

- Exercise
- Establish a healthy sleep pattern
- See a nutritionist
- Take a vacation
- Re-connect with your spouse
- Re-connect with your other children

*Reconnect*

**What ideas do you have?**

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**• ANXIETY RECOVERY**

• Anxiety recovery can be a slow process because your brain is now habituated to respond to triggers by inducing an increased heart beat, forcing an onrush of adrenalin and cortisol through the brain, and leaving you with the overwhelming sense of panic that accompanies an acute attack. However, like most other conditions, you can heal from this simply by taking a few practical steps.



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- Here are some suggestions for your recovery from anxiety:
- Acknowledge that the main trigger, your child, is no longer your full responsibility
- Change the things in your life that are smaller triggers
- Distract from racing thoughts
- Take a yoga class



Your ideas?

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**STRESS RECOVERY**

It's time to learn how to respond to your day based on what you need and want and wish. You may still have other children at home to raise, so now when they ask for a ride somewhere you can decide what to do about that without first thinking about whether you can leave your challenged child or youth at home alone for ten minutes (resulting in a fire being set or your room prowled through and items missing) or what you will have to do to get him to come with you in the car (resulting in swearing and maybe a new hole punched in the wall). Your brain will still be assuming that there are complications to everything, so learn to take a deep and tension releasing breath before you answer.



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- Here are some suggestions for your recovery from stress:
- Exercise, neurofeedback, biofeedback, therapy, support, skill & knowledge acquisition, positive & nurturing self talk
- You can de-stress your brain and your life by focusing on you!



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**• CO-DEPENDENCE RECOVERY**

• You will have to consider whether your relationship with your challenged child developed into a form of co-dependence. It may have, or not. If you decide it did become co-dependent, then it's important to determine if you generalized any of the co-dependent traits to your other important relationships. Think about the other important people in your life – have you become controlling with them? Are you focused on their needs at the expense of your own? Do you have fuzzy boundaries with them? Once you have decided that you have done so, you can begin a dialogue with those involved and let them know that you will be changing your part of the dynamic.



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**• Here are suggestions for your co-dependency recovery:**

- Reach out to co-dependent recovery groups on line and in your community
- Set and enforce boundaries
- Don't take on the responsibility for the emotional well being of others
- You may also find it helpful to begin examining what your needs are at this point in your life; and, how you can meet those needs. Who can help you with that process? Who is an obstacle to your change? If others in your life aren't able to come to terms with this, then move on with your own changes anyway.



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- Moving on and re-creating your life.
- What ideas do you have? What are your first steps going to be?



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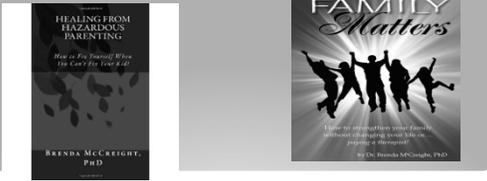
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- You can check out other services and products at these sites:
- <http://www.lifespacecounseling.com>
- <http://www.thisspacecounselor.com>
- <http://www.hazardousparenting.com>
- The Hazardous Parenting facebook site
- Udemy.com (search under Brenda McCreight)
- Slideshare.com (search under Brenda McCreight)
- Amazon.com (search under Brenda McCreight)
- [brendamccreight@gmail.com](mailto:brendamccreight@gmail.com)
- Brenda provides counseling and parent coaching worldwide via skype, telephone, and email - please contact her by email if you would like to book an appointment.



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