Parenting Burnout and Dysregulation: The Cycle That's Exhausting You Both Transcript

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What Co-Disregulation Feels Like

Have you ever promised yourself you were going to stay calm with your kid? And five minutes later, you're yelling, not because you want to, but because something inside of you bubbles and escalates at that moment.

And that movement is incredibly common, no one really explains what happens. That's what we're diving into now. Imagine a typical evening, you're making dinner, your kid starts whining, maybe then arguing and refusing, over something simple.

What happens to you? What happened to your body? Your shoulders tighten. Your voice gets a little sharper and suddenly you are louder than you really anticipated and thought you would be.

Maybe you even sound like your own parents. And you're thinking, how did this go bad so fast? And again, we've all been there. And that moment is what I call co-disregulation.

Parents often believe their child is triggering them. But what if what's actually happening is something more biological? Because dysregulations spreads through nervous systems, much like yawning spreads through room and emotional states will spread between people, especially between parents and their kids.

Like your kid's in a good mood, you feel it.

How Nervous Systems Mirror Each Other

When you're in a crabby mood, your kid feels it. Let's talk about the science behind what happens because our nervous systems are deeply interconnected, especially child and parent.

And research on emotional contagions show that people automatically mirror the emotional states of those around us. So, this isn't just at home. This happens at work.

We all know this too. Your heart rate will synchronize. Breathing patterns can synchronized. Stress hormones can rise together. And this is particularly powerful, again, between caregivers and children.

That also means teacher and classroom. You all remember that lovely teacher, don't we? I remember my teacher in kindergarten. She was like 100 years old.

But I remember her as somebody in their seventies, she really did look like that. She was lovely and we had such a good time because I hated school, but I loved her.

And so also there's a brain system that what we talk about, what happens with the sinking is this mirror neuron system. which helps us to automatically simulate what we see other people experiencing.

It's happening at a deeply neurological level. So when a child escalates emotionally, the adult brain begins mirroring that state. Now, that's what happens on that subconscious level unless we train it to something else.

And when it starts going into overdrive, our own stress hormones are going to start kicking in. This is biology, people. We can get in there. The nervous system starts shifting towards threat mode.

And the thinking brain, that prefrontal cortex that I talk about all the time, becomes less available. Parent, child, coworker, spouse, when you're in this situation, this is what happens on a biological level.

The Parent-Child Escalation Spiral

So this why escalation can happen so quickly, not because you are choosing it, but because your nervous system is reacting. How about that? So here's the hard truth many parents eventually discover that two dysregulated nervous systems can't create calm.

Bam! We know that. Now, remember, you only gotta be 80% awesome. I'm not expecting you to be 100%, so give yourself some grace. But let's talk about this co-disregulation spiral.

that many people are living in and don't know how to get out. So let's walk through what happens. Number one, this is like the order of what happened.

The kid becomes overwhelmed. Maybe they have a learning disability, maybe they didn't sleep well, who knows? Their nervous system shifts into fight, flight, freeze.

They yell, they refuse, and they melt down. Then the next thing that happened is the parent's nervous system reacts to that intensity. Your heart rate's going to kick in, that stress hormone is all happening.

Then, the third part of this codisregulation cycle is that parent responds with urgency, frustration or control or demands. That's the same as control.

You will do this. Next, part four of this is a child perceives even more threat and the nervous system goes up and escalates and up levels, not in a good way.

Now you're both nervous systems are feeding off each other, now in good a way, and this what co-disregulation looks like, where the nerves system is getting each of you to go further into that co dysregulations cycle.

And once it starts, it can go bad. go south real quick. And this is why we need to talk about parent burnout, because parenting a dysregulated kid places enormous demands on the adult nervous system.

When this was happening to me, when my max was in the worst of his pants, man, I must have been shooting cortisol. I know I was shooting a cortisol all at the wrong time of day.

It was low in morning and it was going off at night and I doing every supplement known to man trying to get those cortisol levels down, but I wasn't regulating my nervous systems to the level.

that i should have been because i kept thinking we were gonna get on the other side of it and so i ignored myself trying to help my kid but instead i was making things worse what's happening they're managing a lot repeated meltdowns unpredictable behavior that seems to be like The wind blew when your kid went off, right?

Emotional intensity, sleep disruptions, constant worry about their kid and not being able to get proper help or they're afraid they gonna live in their basement.

Parent Burnout and Chronic Stress

All the stuff, almost said the S word. All this stuff that we're worrying about at two o'clock in the morning. And I know a lot of you find me in this show at 2 o clock in morning, and I'm glad.

I am glad you're educating yourself, but you know what Philomena would say, we've got to move our coolly. We're going to talk about some action steps.

But over time, what happens is the parent nervous system becomes chronically activated too. And many parents are living in that state of constant anticipation, waiting for the next explosion, Waiting for that freak out waiting.

For the shut down. I know and that level of ongoing stress leads to what many. Parents describe burnout fatigue

overwhelm short patients feeling like.

you're always on edge and maybe not even just with your kid, maybe in your marriage, in maybe your family, your job, because this stuff just starts spreading, not in a good way because you are overloaded.

And this isn't a parenting failure, it's a nervous system overload. Your nervous systems does not have the capacity it needs. That's important. So if you've lost your patience with you kid You're not alone.

And this doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. It means your nervous system has been under enormous pressure and regulation isn't just something that children need, it's parents need it too.

Just like I told you, I was ignoring myself. when Max was at his worst because I kept thinking we would get to the other side of it. Instead, I just destroyed myself.

I destroyed my own immune system, my hormones, and my metabolic system. It took me time to get out of that until I really focused on regulating. So the nervous system that we really have to start shifting, so thinking about how can we get out of this co-disregulation viral, because it doesn't require perfect parenting.

What it does require is a nervous systems becoming calmer, one nervous systemic becoming calm than the other. Guess what? You've got to put your big boy and girl panties on, underwear, whatever you want to call them.

And it's gonna be you. It's gotta be the adult. And yes, we want regulated kids, but it is not gonna happen until you get your nervous system regulated.

When the adults nervous systems slows down and their emotional tone is better, that is when things begin to shift because children's nervous are wired to detect all the little non-verbal cues you're putting out, right?

I think you've been hearing me talk a little bit more about how I really read people.

Regulation Starts With the Adult

And we have so many, like, gifts, I don't play poker, but people will say they play Poker and they analyze and watch people, And I don't think people realize how much you give away when you're stressed or when your happy or you are afraid.

You are constantly giving little signs of that and your kids are going to know it better than anybody because they're with you. So a slower voice or the softer posture, calming your breathing down, those are signals that communicate safety.

trust at the deeply subconscious level, moms and dads and grandparents and teachers. It is happening at such a level that you're not even aware of. People always, when I say, oh, yeah, they have social anxiety or whatever, and people will be like, how do you know?

And I started to having to really think about all the things I was picking up so that I could teach other people because a lot of my friends want to know why I'm so good at communicating and also figuring things out.

And i'm like because they don't even have to tell me things like I can literally see it. And you can hear when people are talking, it's not what they're telling me, It's how they are telling it, how their body.

And so it is the same thing with our kids. They are just radar detecting it. Like, oh yeah. We are going to talk about how you don't have to be perfect because you do not.

But you have know that their brain needs regulation. And so how do we do this for parents? We need a reset strategy. In my book, The Disregulated Kid, it's very simple.

You know on the show, I'm trying to always give you something simple, something you're not going to choke on, Something you can do. So let's do one simple reset that many parents find helpful.

When things get really dysregulate, Okay? And it's like a hot mess. Here are three things that you can do. You're gonna lower your voice, slow your breath.

This is all possible with my love pause, which is the three second pause by the way. Gotta pause. Zip your mouth and be quiet and pause but lower that voice.

Slow the breathing. Relax your shoulders and you're going to feel this inside. And then that's going to send a signal to your kid through their nervous system.

You don't have to say anything. And often within seconds that it will start lowering the emotional intensity of the room. You can choose only if you have the room.

I talk tons about this in my book. But until you create your own capacity, you can't choose not to join them in their dysregulation. And that's when things start to shift.

Calm doesn't come from control. calm spreads through the nervous system. Parenting a dysregulated kid can be one of the most demanding nervous system challenges an adult faces, especially when you've got some unresolved stuff from your old childhood where it can super triggering.

Many parents tell me that. And don't be ashamed. Take action, though, right? So how we approach these moments of dysregulation is going to change everything.

This isn't a battle of wills. It's not like, oh, you're going be like this kid is totally doing this on purpose. Most of the time, kids are. But it's an interaction, those moments between the two nervous systems.

A Simple Reset Strategy for Parents

And you can choose how that goes. And again, that's only gonna be possible if you've created your own capacity to be that thing that your child regulates off, an anchor, a battery.

And that is something everybody can do. I just don't think too many people are talking about this. That's why you're here with Dr. Roe, and that why regulation first is so important.

When that one nervous system begins to settle, because you know when your kid's regulated, You're more regulated. But when yours really begins to settle, theirs will follow.

It might not happen overnight, people. Remember, intensity, frequency, and duration is really what you're looking for. And the more you create those deposits in the nervous system bank, you'll create capacity in that stress cup by taking out all these little pieces and giving it some room.

The more regulated our kids will be on their own, but they need you to be the co regulator and you can do it. You don't have to. Be into this like irritation and know that the A in comms is avoiding personalizing.

And when you really understand the science of the nervous system, You don't have to personalize. It's just the nervous system getting triggered. So we can shift that.

If you're trying to understand what may be driving your kid's dysregulation, the best place to start is identifying the pattern. And that's exactly why I created the Solution Matcher.

Finding Patterns and Getting Support

it's a very short quiz that helps you identify what maybe affecting your child's nervous system so you can focus on

the right supports and all you have to do is go to drrosanne.com forward slash help because when you understand what's happening in the nervous.

You can really start changing that pattern getting out of this code dysregulation cycle and become regulated. We can go into a co-regulation and then it just starts working beautifully in the background and you don't even have to think about it because you're doing all these things all the time.

You're moving yourself, you are moving your child out of this spiral. and you don't have to be there, I promise you, but you've got to take one step and that's regulating first.

Want more insights and solutions? Well, subscribe to our Disregulation Insider and it will show up in your inbox every week.