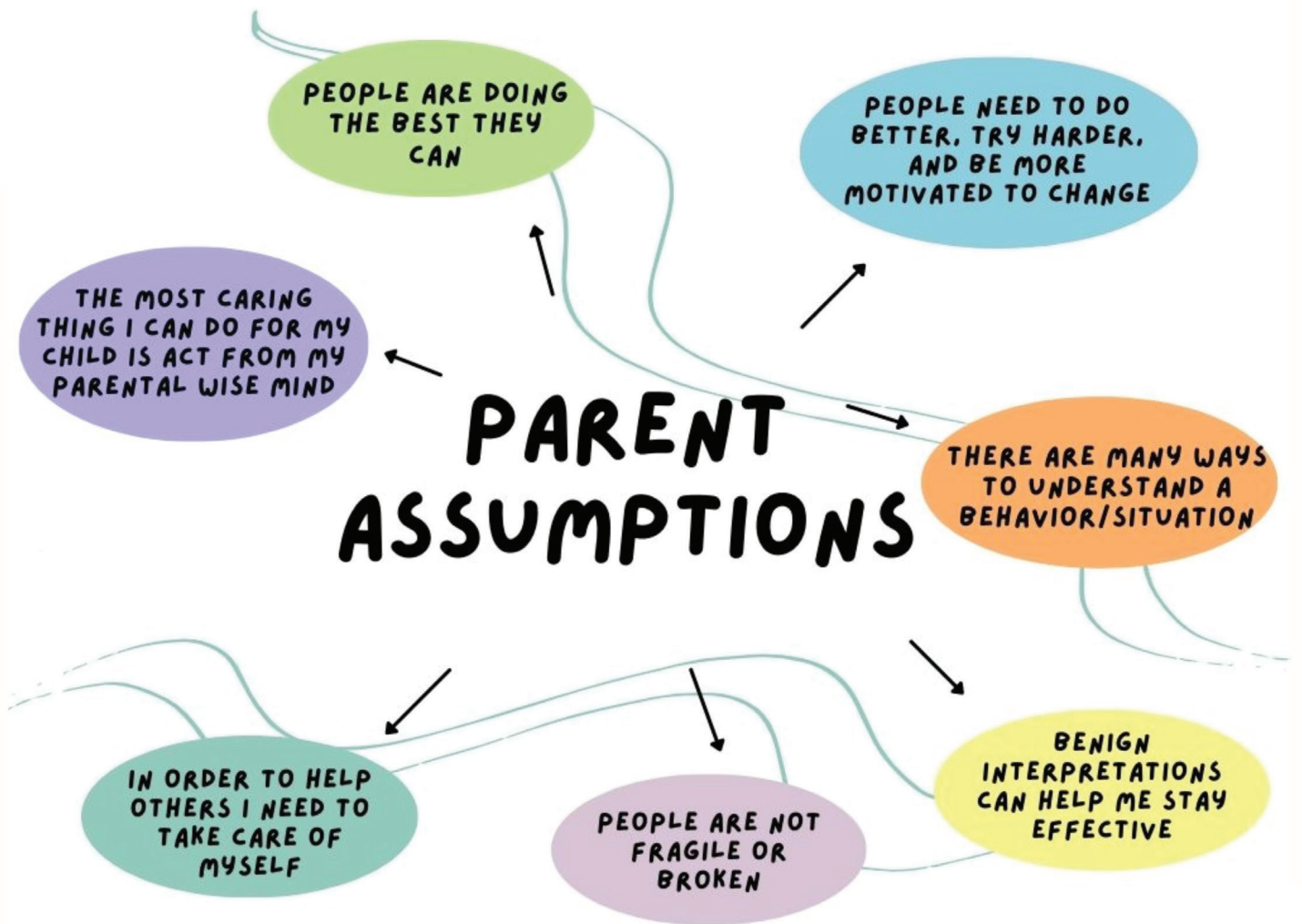


## Parent Assumptions



# Acceptance is Key

Parents can have thought and belief patterns that get in the way of acting effectively with their teen. One difficult thought pattern can be blaming yourself or blaming others for your teen's mental health concerns. Let's look at this dialectic:

**BLAME SELF    RADICAL ACCEPTANCE    BLAME OTHERS**

## Blame Self

Another term for blaming yourself is *personalization*. When parents blame themselves, they are taking responsibility for their teen's mental health or decisions. Blaming yourself can also mean seeing what your teen does as a direct reflection on you.

Some examples include thinking you are a bad parent because your teen has anxiety or thinking you did something wrong because your teen got a D in a class.

The problem with this thought pattern is that parents do not have control over their teen's mental health or decisions. Parents who find themselves on this end of the dialectic may end up pressuring their kids, often because their confidence as a parent has become dependent on how well their teen is doing. Alternatively, parents may end up doing too much for their teen in an effort to "fix" the situation. These beliefs and behaviors can actually get in the way of their teen getting better.

## Blame Others

Parents can also end up blaming others for their teen's mental health issues. This could include blaming your spouse, teachers, therapists or the teen.

Some examples include blaming your spouse for your teen's bad grades because your spouse let your teen go out with friends during the week or blaming your teen for self-injury because he or she is "not working hard enough."

The problem with this thought pattern is that this blame is often unfounded and creates guilt and shame. This makes a difficult situation even worse. Parents who find themselves on this end of the dialectic may be over-focused on big changes and will not recognize small improvements. These parents may not see how they are contributing to difficult situations. This, too, can get in the way of teens getting better.

## Radical Acceptance

Finding the middle ground means practicing Radical Acceptance. With Radical Acceptance, you do not blame yourself or others. Instead, notice and accept your strengths and weaknesses in helping your teen

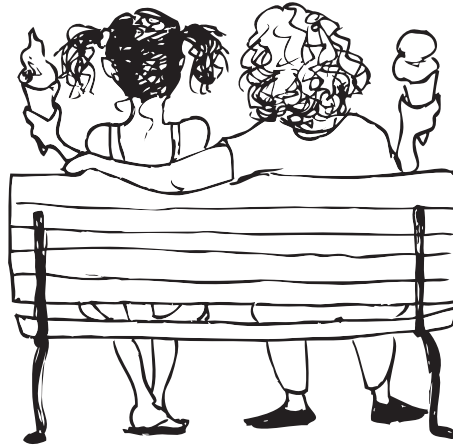
with his or her mental health concerns and also notice and accept other's strengths and weaknesses. With acceptance, you are being non-judgmental and are working with the facts (Linehan, 1993b). Remember that Radical Acceptance does not mean giving up or pretending things are good the way they are. Instead, Radical Acceptance means simply knowing and acknowledging what is. In other words, with acceptance, you are no longer fighting what you cannot change. Acceptance means working from where you are—not where you want to be or the way you think things “should” be.

For parents, acceptance means recognizing that your teen's choices are not your choices, and that his or her struggles are not your responsibility to fix. It is your role to support and help your teen, but ultimately your teen's choices are his or her own. Blaming yourself or others for everything does not help and can create suffering.

## Parent–Teen Shared Pleasant Activities List

**Instructions:** Check off the activities on this list that you would enjoy doing with your parent/teen. Then compare lists (or fill this out together) and select a few activities that you can enjoy together—aim for at least 3 per week.

\*Also, remember to respect each other’s need for privacy and alone time.



- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Going bicycling                        | 13. Bowling                                    | 24. Having a barbecue                                |
| 2. Going for coffee                       | 14. Playing golf                               | 25. Going camping                                    |
| 3. Going out for ice cream/<br>yogurt     | 15. Going for a drive                          | 26. Listening to music you<br>both like              |
| 4. Cooking or baking                      | 16. Fixing up part of your<br>home             | 27. Going to a show, game,<br>or concert             |
| 5. Getting a manicure                     | 17. Doing a crossword<br>puzzle                | 28. Watching a favorite TV<br>show or movie together |
| 6. Going for a massage                    | 18. Skiing, ice skating                        | 29. Going for a walk/run                             |
| 7. Walking by the beach                   | 19. Having some quiet<br>reading time together | 30. Getting your hair or<br>makeup done together     |
| 8. Planning a vacation                    | 20. Going to a café/out to<br>eat              | 31. Talking about when you<br>were little            |
| 9. Going shopping                         | 21. Going to an amusement<br>park              | 32. Visiting relatives or<br>friends together        |
| 10. Watching a ballgame                   | 22. Going to a museum                          |  |
| 11. Doing yard work/<br>gardening         | 23. Playing catch                              |  |
| 12. Playing with pets,<br>walking the dog |  |  |

(continued)

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**Parent-Teen Shared Pleasant Activities List** (page 2 of 2)

- |  |   |                      |
|--|---|----------------------|
| 33. Doing community service/volunteer work | 43. Talking about future plans together   | <b>Add Your Own!</b> |
| 34. Shopping for a gift                    | 44. Planning a surprise for someone   | 51. _____            |
| 35. Talking about your day                 |   | _____                |
| 36. Playing videogames                     | 45. Joking around/being silly   | 52. _____            |
| 37. Playing board games or cards           | 46. Doing a creative hobby together (e.g., painting, drawing, knitting, scrapbooking, model building) | _____                |
| 38. Looking thru photos                    |   | 53. _____            |
| 39. Going to a park                        |   | _____                |
| 40. Working out/going to the gym           | 47. Taking an art class   | 54. _____            |
| 41. Take a yoga/exercise class             | 48. Looking at/showing your favorite website  | _____                |
| 42. Playing music/jamming together         | 49. Teaching the other one something new (e.g., in technology, photography)                           | 55. _____            |
|  | 50. Telling family stories  | _____                |