

Success in Relationships

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Improving Parent Relationships

- Basic Principals
 - Relationships take work, can't be just based on "feelings"
 - People spend 4+ years at college preparing for a job, but spend little to no time preparing for marriage/relationships
 - Many people do not have a good concept of a healthy relationships
 - Expectations too high or too low
 - Rely on unhealthy models they grew up with
 - Stress of DMD will magnify any existing relationship problems.

Watch out for...



Everyone argues, but work toward a solution/resolution, not a “victory”...

- Criticism (attacking someone’s character)
 - Contempt (belittling, invalidating)
 - Defensiveness (denying, minimizing, justifying, blaming others)
 - Stonewalling (shutting down communication)
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- -John Gottman

Watch out for...

- Unrealistic expectations of partner
 - They should know what I need/want without me having to tell them.
- Sacrifice partner relationship to focus on kids/DMD
- Guilt/blame about carrier status

Grief

Diagnosis of DMD causes a grief reaction.

Different grief types:

Ignore the problem

Pillar of Strength (No outward emotion)

Workaholic

It's Not Fair! (Anger)

Change the world

Let's Process

It's the End of the World as We Know It (and I don't feel fine)

Grief

- Grief styles may change, timing may not “match”
- Different grief styles/timing may cause feelings of alienation, resentment, isolation.
- Different grief styles may not “work together”:

Let's Process vs. Ignore the Problem

It's Not Fair vs. Pillar of Strength

End of the World vs. Change the World

Other factors

- DMD is financially straining in the best of circumstances
- Overly-rigid roles
- Family dynamics with extended family are often strained even more with Duchenne

Teamwork

- Acknowledge that DMD is the enemy, not each other.
- You are stronger as a team, working together.
- No one understands what you are going through like your partner does.

Adjust Expectations

- Allow for different grieving styles
- Be extra patient, provide more grace
- Focus on being/expecting “good enough”

Connect

- Make partner your priority
- Humor
- Set short-term and long term goals

Communicate

DO

- LISTEN
- Validate feelings
- Respect their concerns, even if you disagree
- Paraphrase what they are saying
- Ask questions for information (not to make a point)
- Acknowledge mistakes, apologize
- Forgive
- Use “I” statements
- Work toward compromise

DON'T

- Focus on winning
- Attack their character
- Belittle their concerns or ideas
- Listen only enough to point out how they are wrong
- Tell them what they should have done
- Make global statements (“You ALWAYS...”)