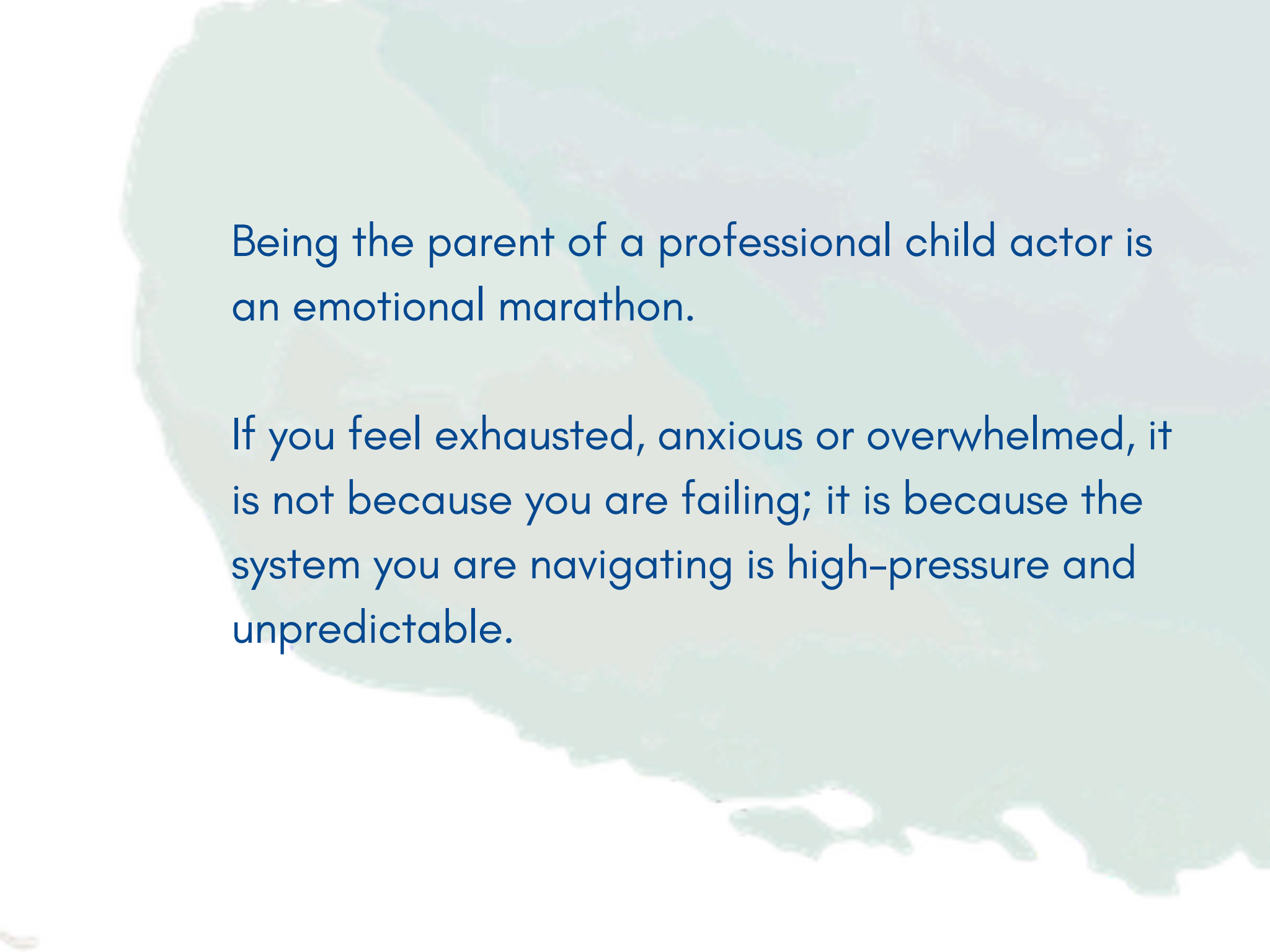


Self Care for Parents of Children who Perform Professionally





Being the parent of a professional child actor is an emotional marathon.

If you feel exhausted, anxious or overwhelmed, it is not because you are failing; it is because the system you are navigating is high-pressure and unpredictable.

You are constantly living on standby,
waiting for a phone call that could
change your child's life, but might also
disrupt your (and your entire family's)
week / month / year.

Is the self tape perfect?
Have I chosen the best agent?
Should I sign my child up for an
expensive workshop?
Can we afford to go to London
for another audition?



Why do I feel like a
problem rather than
part of a solution?

Why do none of my friends
understand why I'm so stressed
about the licensing turnaround?

By identifying your stress triggers, managing peer pressure, and communicating clearly with agents, chaperones and others in the industry, you build a healthier, more resilient life for yourself, and a sustainable career for your child.

Industry
knowledge

Anxiety

Last
minute
requests

STRESS

Waiting to
hear back

Technical
Skills

Communication
with school and
agents

Handovers to
chaperones

Competitive
parents

Anxiety

The industry relies on intermittent reinforcement – rare, high-stakes rewards that keep your nervous system in a state of chronic hyper-vigilance.

Solution: When a high-stakes email lands in your inbox, do not react immediately. Give yourself 20 minutes to process your own adrenaline spike privately. By protecting your own nervous system first, you ensure you aren't passing that anxiety down to your child.

Last-Minute Requests

Call times for the next day arriving at 9pm (or later) or self-tapes requested with little time to prepare create a sense of emergency, forcing you to drop everything and live on permanent standby.

Solution: If a request arrives later than 5pm, give yourself permission to breathe before responding. Your role is to be a calm role model for your child; you cannot do that if you are absorbing and mitigating for the industry's last-minute nature.

Technical Skills

You may feel that you are expected to be a self-taught cinematographer, lighting director, and IT troubleshooter. The pressure to deliver a high-quality self-tape from a kitchen corner creates intense "Director vs. Parent" friction.

Solution: An adequate self-tape with a relaxed, happy child is infinitely more bookable and sustainable than a technically perfect tape that has stopped feeling fun – for your child or for you.

Protecting the Child/Parent Bond

Having a performing child can turn you into a manager, a driver and a critic. When the industry's pressure enters the home, the parent/child relationship can start feeling like it's revolving entirely around the next casting or job.

Solution: Intentionally separate "Work Time" from "Family Time." When the self-tape is finished or the script is put away, mindfully declare the "Work" over – for you AND your child. Re-establish the bond through fun family-centred activities where your child isn't a performer and you aren't a manager.

Protecting the Child/Parent Bond

Solution Continued:

Remember that the industry routinely demands adult-level stamina (up to 9-hour days) from young minds and bodies. When a job or long rehearsal day ends, your child (and yourself) may experience an emotional or physical crash. Expecting you both to step seamlessly back into normal life is unrealistic; give yourselves the grace and quiet space to decompress without judgment.

Communications (Schools, Agents & Others)

You are the primary negotiator, often caught between a rigid school attendance policy and a short-notice career opportunity. It can leave you in a state of constant social anxiety and on high alert.

Solution: Shift from asking for permission from the school to notifying of a professional engagement. Legitimising the absence as a professional development opportunity removes the moral burden.

If your agent isn't supportive, or makes you feel like a bother when you ask questions, it may be worth looking at other agents.

Industry Knowledge

If your professional background is in a different industry then it's likely that you have a knowledge gap. Not knowing the legal frameworks can leave you feeling vulnerable and at the mercy of bureaucracy that you can't control.

Solution: You are responsible for your child's career. Access centralised and reputable resources (such as NNCEE or Spotlight) to understand your child's legal and financial rights. When you understand what your rights are, and what a production company's responsibilities are, the industry starts to feel manageable. All this information is available for free. It is not necessary to pay exorbitant fees to experts.

Handovers to Chaperones

You know your child's specific needs, yet you are often expected to just hand them over to a stranger at a stage door and disappear, leaving your child (and you) feeling vulnerable.

Solution: Create an Access Rider for your child and request a mandatory 5-minute briefing with the chaperone before the working day begins. Clear communication is a fundamental safeguarding tool, not a nuisance. Presenting this information calmly and in advance ensures your knowledge is valued as a professional asset.

Waiting to Hear Back

There is an unhealthy "Dopamine Loop" in constantly checking emails, social media and forums. Even after intense preparatory work, you are often left in total silence, wondering if you could have done more.

Solution: Follow the "No Research" rule: do not Google flights, hotels, or restaurants until a contract is signed. When anxiety hits, intentionally engage in a mundane, non-industry task. Stay in your actual reality, not the potential one.

Competitive Parenting

Waiting rooms and social media job reveals create a culture of comparisons and competitiveness. It makes you feel that if your child isn't booking, you are somehow failing to provide them with the right look or the best coaching.

Solution: Be kind, but keep your child's professional business (recalls, pencils, earnings) private. Another child's booking is not a reflection of your child's talent. Social media is addictive, and an energy and mental health drain.

Ask these questions before a job

1. "Can we have a 5-minute introduction with the chaperone?" (To ensure a safe handover).
2. "Is there a quiet space provided for my child during break times?" (To manage sensory load).
3. "Will travel and subsistence be reimbursed for the accompanying parent?" (To prevent financial loss).
4. "Can the call times be confirmed with at least 48 hours notice?" (To allow for family planning).

"What if they say no?"

Production models are notoriously rigid, and you may not get a 'yes' to every request. Asking these questions isn't just about getting the perfect answer, it is about signaling to production that you are an informed, proactive partner.

If they cannot accommodate a request (e.g., they cannot confirm call times 48 hours in advance), it allows you to plan for the disruption ahead of time rather than being caught entirely off guard.

Positive Actions For You

Physically Discharge the Stress

After a high-stakes audition, a long chaperone handover, or a sudden rejection, do not sit still. Spend 5 minutes doing a deliberate physical release: shake out your hands and feet, do deep box breathing (inhale 4s, hold 4s, exhale 4s, hold 4s), or put on a favorite track and dance.

Stress isn't just psychological; it lives in the body. When a high-stress event ends, your body needs a physical signal that the danger has passed so it can transition out of fight-or-flight and stop cortisol from stagnating in your system.

Positive Actions For You

Feed Your Individuality

Protect one hobby, project, or creative outlet for yourself that has absolutely nothing to do with children or performance and schedule it as an unmovable appointment.

Safekeeping a space where you are valued for your skills, thoughts and passions ensures your self-worth isn't tethered to casting directors, agents, or your child booking a job.

Positive Actions For You

Curate Your Social Ecosystem

Unfollow or mute social media accounts, influencers and peer groups that trigger comparison or anxiety. Actively seek out friendships and communities completely detached from the performing arts.

You need spaces where your life is understood as normal. Surrounding yourself with people who don't care about licensing turnarounds or Spotlight profiles grounds you in the real world.

Additional Help

- NNCEE (National Network for Children in Employment & Entertainment)
 - Official info on local council rules, application forms and legal working hours.
- Spotlight Young Performer Support Hub
 - Free, expert-vetted guides. Practical tips on stress-free self-taping and profile management.
- Equity (Under 18 Membership)
 - Workplace protection. Subsidised child union membership providing expert legal advice, contract checks and specialised tax support.
- Sensible Creative
 - Free, accessible tools to support parents

Additional Help

- Arts Minds & BAPAM
 - Performance-focused clinical care, therapeutic support, and coping with industry rejection.
- Applause for Thought
 - Safeguarding psychological health. Practical tools to ensure emotional safety during a production.
- Film and TV Charity
 - Mental health backing for anyone behind the scenes. They offer a completely free, confidential helpline, financial advice and access to free counselling to help you process industry burnout and anxiety.
- Family Lives
 - They offer a free helpline and online modules focused on parent anxiety, managing family conflict under pressure, and emotional regulation.

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