

## Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

# Parenting and Self Care



BY KIM DEMARCHI

All in a day in the life of a parent: school, sports, homework, games, lessons, carpooling, church, fundraising, meals, shopping, birthday parties, holidays and the list goes on and on. With all of those

things on the calendar to do, is it any wonder why sometimes we feel stressed? Why is it that my child can spill a glass of milk one day and I lose my temper, and on another day when that same child spills that same glass of milk, I hardly have a reaction....it was merely a mistake.

Have you ever been on an airplane, getting ready to take off, and the airline attendant gives the “oxygen mask” speech? Basically it goes like this, “... in the event of an emergency, put your oxygen mask on first, and then assist your child with theirs.” Notice the request: Put yours on first, then you will be able to help your child. All too often we satisfy the needs of our children and others before our own. As a result, our energy is depleted and we have nothing left to give, or we may give with resentment and frustration. We will be of no value to our children if we don’t get our needed oxygen! I absolutely love this analogy! It’s so simple and so true! If we aren’t taking care of ourselves, we won’t be at our best to take care of our families.

What do you look like and sound like when you are NOT taking care of yourself? I can be impatient, short tempered, irritable, controlling, grouchy, and not very much fun. Who wants to have those qualities? On the other hand, when I’ve been taking care of myself, I’m loving, patient, fun, creative, understanding, helpful, and a good listener.

I ask my clients these questions, “How long has it been since you’ve had thirty minutes by yourself to do whatever you wanted?” “What do you do to take care of yourself?” Common answers I hear are, “I can’t remember the last

time I did something for myself,” or, “I don’t have time to do that.” Some important reasons parents may not take care of themselves include:

- You may have been taught that it is selfish.
- You may feel that taking “down time” is not a good use of your time.
- Perhaps you don’t believe you deserve time for yourself.
- You might believe that you don’t have, or can’t find, the time.
- Maybe you just don’t know how to take care of yourself.

However, there is so much to gain when we do take care of ourselves:

- We feel refreshed and energized and have more energy for our children.
- We feel more confident and creative when our children surprise us.
- We are actually ready and eager to spend time with our families.
- We are teaching our children, by example, how important it is to take care of themselves.
- We are certainly more patient and tolerant.

Parents, you must refuel, and find ways to restore your energy. That practice will look different for each of you. You each must know what calms or rejuvenates yourself. For me, I love going on walks with friends, having my morning cup of tea, going to the movies, reading, catching up with friends over coffee, traveling, baking, going to concerts, lighting my candles, and getting manicures and pedicures. My husband’s list would look very different. It may include: reading the newspaper cover to cover, listening to music, cooking a big meal, going for a run, having a cigar around the fire pit, motorcycle riding, reading, watching late night movies, going to concerts, gardening and taking naps in the middle of the day. Each of you is unique; find what works for you!



Regardless of how busy you may be, one of your priorities should be YOU. It won’t just happen. You have to make the time and commitment to nurture yourself. You and everyone around you will benefit if you do it regularly. Your children will survive without you once in awhile. You and your partner can give each other this gift. My husband knows I’m my best self when I’ve had time to take care of myself. If you take time for yourself, you will be ready for the constant demands that parenting places on you.

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