

# Self-Care Tips for Parents

**Look after your own mental health**— Remember to take a “mental health moment” each day. By prioritizing our own mental health and checking in to monitor our needs, we make room for peace and happiness in our lives. Recognizing and maintaining personal boundaries is an important part of attending to our own mental health.



**Give yourself permission to take a break**— Putting ourselves first is nothing to feel guilty about! (Although this can be easier said than done....) When situations become too stressful, “put it in park and walk away.” Acknowledge that you are taking a break. Taking breaks is important and necessary.

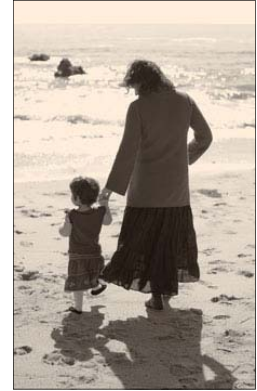
**Free yourself from obligations**— Sometimes it's necessary to free ourselves from obligations, as the pursuit of perfection can get in the way of our own health. Prioritising the expectations of friends and family can be a great way to start this. For example, not making any social engagements in December may be helpful for some of us. Also, supporting and respecting a spouse or partner's decision to do things for him/her self can be another way to lessen our own load.



**Continue personal development**— Take up a new hobby! Try something different: perhaps exercise, knitting, or jewelry making? Volunteering or working for organizations that we are interested in is another way to feel fulfilled. In addition, enjoying childhood and parenthood as much as possible allows us to grow in many new ways.

## Self-Care Cont'd...

**Have courage and hope** — Maintaining an open attitude about what comes in life can foster good things! Using our energy to educate and empower ourselves opens doors for personal growth and happiness. We need to remember to focus on our strengths and build on them.



**Focus on positives** — Recognizing negative thought patterns such as denial, anger, and defensiveness is the first step towards recognizing where the positives are. We can then reframe our perspective by focusing on those positives. For example, other people may tell you that your child with ADHD is hyperactive, while you can show appreciation for your child's amazing energy and recognize that he/she will be productive in the future. Another example is choosing to recognize that your child is practicing his/her debating skills when you are in a fight with each other. Finally, reframing thoughts such as, "what is wrong with my kids?" to "what is right with my kids?" or "what aspects of my kids make me proud?" are examples of the power of altering the way we think about situations.

**Maintain serenity and balance in your life** — Trying to find or maintain balance can be a big task, but it often starts in small and simple ways. Lighting candles to relax our mood, pouring a bubble bath, turning on soothing music, taking a "calm down moment" with your child where you both take 5 deep breaths, and taking time to look out the window for a bit are all simple and effective ways to start this process.



## Self-Care Cont'd...



**Laughter is the best medicine** — Why is laughter really the best medicine? It reduces stress hormones and boosts your immune system! Laughter also enhances our good moods, which is very beneficial for mental health. If we're laughing heartily enough, it can also be a great form of exercise!

**Exercise** — For those of us who do not have well established work-out routines, adding exercise to schedules can seem like a daunting task. It is very important to remember, however, that 20 minutes of walking per day is enough to release hormones called endorphins into our system, which act to make us feel happy! Exploring new types of exercise can be a great way to find something we enjoy, which is a key ingredient in a realistic work-out regime. In addition, exercise can be a great way for loved ones or family members to spend special time together and reconnect.



**Give and accept support from others** — People who have complete understanding of our situation can be excellent resources for discussing difficulties or venting. Find time to sit and have conversations with each other, and make sure to spend time with people who make you feel good!

**References:** Speakers Notes, 2010 January, Kelty Centre's Teleconference on Parental Self-Care from FORCE Representatives Jeanine Rohr and Marlisse McRobie