Self-Care Strategies: Tips for Moms

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Many moms abandon their own self-care in an effort to take care of their children and of all of the other responsibilities they have. Yet moms everywhere feel overwhelmed, frazzled, exhausted and under stress because they fail to put themselves on their 'to do' list. In fact, just about all moms with whom I speak find it hard both to prioritize themselves and to find a way of living that feels right, so that they don't feel torn, guilty, exhausted, frazzled, or overwhelmed. Of course, taking care of yourself is not so easy, especially if you are a mom who expects herself to do it all, all of the time.

Here are some answers to the 3 top questions that moms have about self-care:

1. Why is self-care important for my own and my child's wellbeing?

- When moms do not tend to their own needs, they do not perform as well as they are able, and they eventually burn out or have 'mommy-meltdowns'.

- Feeling tired and overwhelmed prevents moms from being the kind of mothers that they want to be because moms who do not take care of themselves often lack optimal levels of patience, energy, and presence of mind.

- Moms tend to feel guilty because when they try to 'do it all' without tending to themselves, they do not perform as well as they could in both their careers and lives.

- Children sense their mothers' fatigue, frustration and stress, and often think it's because of something they did.

- Mothers (over?) react to their children instead of responding in appropriate ways that feel good to both mom and child.

- Moms become resentful because they are doing so much without replenishing their supplies.

2. What are the benefits of self-care?

- Moms have more energy, feel less frazzled and more clear-headed.

- Moms feel more loving, patient and psychologically present when they are with their children.

- Children benefit when moms are taking care of themselves because moms are more happy, energetic and satisfied with life.

- Moms are more responsive and less reactive when their children are being 'demanding' or just acting their age.

- Moms feel more effective performing both their daily responsibilities and work because moms who feel well get more done.

3. How can I nurture my child, get done everything else that I need to get done, and still find time to take care of myself?

Follow these 6 steps to create time for your self:

Step 1. Determine what matters to you most, so that you do not waste time on non-essentials.

Ask yourself:

- What do I care most about right now?

- What drains me of energy?

- What rejuvenates me and makes me feel alive?

- What enervating pursuits suck up my time?

- What activities make me feel calm, healthy and at my best?

Step 2: List the 5-7 things that matter to you most.

Step 3: Utilize the 'ASK/ACT Process'.

Keep what matters to you most in mind:

Ask yourself:

1. *Do I want or need to do this?*

If the answer is 'yes', ACT: put your commitment into your calendar so that you know when it will be done. Remember to ask yourself: what is the most efficient way that I can get this done?

2. *Can someone else do this, or assist me in doing it?*

If your answer is yes, ACT: hand the task over to somebody else or delegate some of the responsibility to another person.

3. *Can I say 'no' to the chore or request*?

If you can, ACT: walk away from the task, close the door behind you and refuse to indulge in any guilt.

STEP 4: Choose 1 thing that you can delegate or say 'no' to, so that you can say 'yes' to yourself (e.g., household errands, fund raisers, lunch dates, serving on committees, etc.).

STEP 5: Choose what self-care activity you want to do during the time you just created (e.g., read, write in a journal, exercise, see a friend, etc.).

STEP 6: Create an accountability plan (e.g., partner with another mom to keep each other on track).