

## Self-care for parents

We all know it's important to take care of ourselves, but for busy parents self-care often seems to slip to the bottom of the list. But taking care of yourself isn't a luxury. It's essential to your own mental health and ability to parent. And the ongoing stress of the pandemic means it's never been more important. Here are some tips that can help.

- **Make time for yourself.** The pandemic has been long, and even though the end is in sight, we're all struggling to maintain our mental health. Being intentional about creating space to recharge and decompress can help. This could look like taking a shower or bath, walking around the block alone (or with your dog), or designating time to read or simply zone out after the kids have gone to bed.
- **Prioritize healthy choices.** Stress can make it easy to slip into habits that feel good in the moment but can be harmful in the long term. This doesn't mean you should be pressuring yourself to get into tip-top shape, swearing off ice cream or beating yourself up for binging your favorite shows instead of doing yoga. It does mean being thoughtful about how you're treating yourself and your body. Small changes like making time to take a walk, doing a short exercise routine, or choosing to go to bed a little earlier than usual can reduce stress and help you feel more relaxed and resilient.
- **Be realistic.** Perfectionism and parenting (and, you know, just being a person) don't mix. Avoid burnout by setting realistic expectations and giving yourself grace if you can't meet them.
- **Set boundaries.** Strong boundaries are a cornerstone of self-care. When you're overwhelmed, it's difficult to care for yourself. But it helps to give yourself permission to say "no" to commitments you just don't have time

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for, ask your partner to pick up some slack at home, or take a break from a friend or family member who has trouble respecting your time. Anything that reduces stress and gives you more space to breathe.

- **Do things that bring you joy.** Parenting can be all-consuming, especially during difficult times. Making time for hobbies or activities you enjoy, or making the choice to learn a new skill, is an important part of caring for yourself. Maybe there's a knitting project you've always wanted to try, or you've been meaning to get back into running. Maybe you'd just like to finish that book you've been reading for a month.
- **Setting an example.** However you choose to practice self-care, remember that making time for yourself is not selfish, it's necessary. And making healthy choices, setting strong boundaries, prioritizing joy — in short, showing that you value yourself — sets an example that will help your children do the same.

#### More Resources from the Child Mind Institute

- ▶ [Self-Care in the Time of Coronavirus](#)
- ▶ [Raising Confident, Independent Children](#)
- ▶ [13 Ways to Boost Your Daughter's Self-Esteem](#)
- ▶ [Encouraging Optimism](#)
- ▶ [How to Help Kids Who Are Too Hard on Themselves](#)
- ▶ [How Mindfulness Can Help During COVID-19](#)

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