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Subject: How to practice self-care



Dear

As a parent it is often hard to find time for just yourself. There are always a million things to do for your kids, pets, and around the house. As a foster or adoptive parent who has a child or children with special needs, there really is no down-time. Doctor's appointments, therapy sessions, school meetings, take up a lot of time, on top of working with your child on any behavioral or emotional needs they may be going through. All of that work is exhausting, and your needs as a parent, as a human being, get pushed to the back burner. Self-care is extremely important for foster and adoptive parents. You are constantly meeting the needs of others, but not your's. And that needs to change. It may be easier said than done, but the following are some ways you can learn to take care of yourself and your family.

Steps to self-care

- Build self-care into your daily routine. You need to first recognize that you need to help yourself to, and that you have needs that must be met.
- Recognize that its ok to ask for help. There is no shame or harm in asking for assistance, in fact, it's healthy!
- Keep your life simple and your routines consistent. Don't overcommit yourself or your family to various activities. Prioritize your time, and save your energy for important activities.
- Don't compare yourselves to others. You are raising a completely different family than your neighbor, sibling, or friend. Your children have different needs than their children do, and you need to set your expectations to meet YOUR family's needs.
- Create a plan for what you know will be the most challenging part of the day. Whether it's getting ready for school, eating dinner, or bedtime, figure out what part of the day is the most challenging for your family and come up with a strategy to make those times smoother. Identify any challenging behaviors or emotions that arise, and brainstorm ways to meet those needs.
- Join a support group. Meeting with other parents who may have shared some of the same experiences may be very beneficial. You can learn new strategies, and have the feeling that you are not alone. Chances are these parents know exactly what you're going through, and will be able to offer support and suggestions.
- Carve out some down-time for yourself. Having time for just yourself is key. It will keep you balanced, and reduce some of the stress you may be feeling. Even just 10 minutes of you doing something you enjoy-having a coffee, taking a walk, reading a magazine article-will help you recharge and give you some feeling of control back in your life.
- Have something you can look forward to every week. Everyone benefits from immediate positive reinforcement, so work that into your schedule. It can be as simple as having a glass of wine or a beer at the end of the week, or spending a couple of hours catching up with a friend. You work hard everyday, so you need to reward yourself with some you-time!
- Look for the positives. There are days when it seems like your whole life and family are falling apart, but even on those bad days, there is some good. It is definitely easier said than done sometimes, but take a step back and evaluate your day. Chances are you'll find something that will make you laugh or smile. Focusing on the positives will make you happier and will allow you to do it all again tomorrow.

Remember that in order to truly take care of others, you also have to take care of yourself. Your family is not going to benefit if you are constantly stressed out and angry. You are allowed some down-time, so take it. When you do, you'll find that you're a better parent and partner.

For more information, visit NACAC's Adoptalk Articles: [Self-Care: Barriers and Basics for Foster/Adoptive Parents](#)

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