

Self-Care Ideas from Parents

Many parents, especially mothers, say that they need ideas on how to bring short moments of self-care into their day, so I've compiled suggestions for you—from other parents! The key is to give yourself explicit permission to take a few minutes several times a day to re-charge and re-center. Remember, you can't give your children the emotional generosity they deserve if you're running on empty. Most of these are ideas you can do while with your children.

Breathe

- “Just regular deep breathing for a few minutes throughout the day has made a huge improvement to my mood and well-being!”
- “If I close my eyes and breathe even once a day for five minutes, I feel better and I parent better.”
- “Just a few moments of deep breathing and visualizing something positive.”

Move

Exercise increases endorphins, which make us happy, and serotonin, which calms us, so it's an effective treatment for depression and anxiety. Moving your body is the fastest route to shifting your mood and enhancing your sense of well-being.

- “Find a gym with a nursery and go there often.”
- “Put on music and dance with your kids.”
- “Get your kids out of the house and run around with them at the park.”
- “Take your baby with you to a ‘Baby and Me’ exercise class.”
- “Take my dog for a run.”
- “Work out even if it's just for 15 minutes.”

Excerpted from the **Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids WORKBOOK** by Dr. Laura Markham. Please do not reproduce without permission.

- “Take walks during lunch at work.”
- “Lay on a yoga ball and roll back gently to stretch out your neck and upper back.”

Sleep

- “Go to bed when the children do.”
- “Nap with your kids.”

Music

- “Put on music you like to lift your mood.”
- “Put on dance music and move with your kids.”
- “Put on your favorite music and sing along loudly.”

Nature

- “Wear your baby, put your child in a stroller, and get outside.”
- “When I need a minute or two, I step out back and enjoy looking at my plants.”
- “Pulling a few weeds is a good mindless activity that makes me feel great.”
- “Just stand in the sunshine for a minute and drink it in.”
- “Plant flowers. If the kids are big enough to play outside, they can plant with you, or they can play while you plant.”
- “Smell flowers.”
- “If you can’t get outside, play nature sounds on your phone or computer. It may sound silly, but it helps me.”

Meditate

- “Even five minutes a day helps.”
- “I do guided meditation, so the kids hear what I’m doing. I invite them to do it with me or give me space to do it alone.”
- “Part of my practice is learning that it doesn’t have to be perfect (or perfectly quiet) for meditation to be worthwhile.”

Yoga

- “Put on a 15-minute yoga video and let the kids join in. Kids love ‘Silly to Calm’ or ‘Cosmic Kids’ yoga on YouTube.”
- “I retreat to my yoga mat when I need to reset. I diffuse essential oils, fold into child’s pose, and focus on my breathing. My two-year-old usually comes with me, but she knows the yoga area is a place for calmness.”

Self-nurture

- “When the kids are busy playing, stop working. Just sit down by yourself for a few minutes.”
- “A hot bubble bath alone.”
- “Washing my face and/or hands and putting on lotion.”
- “I put ice and lemon in my water and use a pretty glass instead of some cartoon cup.”
- “I make sure I have fast, high-protein stuff around to eat.”

Morning miracle

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- “I wake up half an hour before my kids and have coffee in the stillness of the morning. When they wake up, I’m in a good mood.”
- “I wake up one hour before my kids. It’s my time. I use it for Bible study, writing in my journal, and yoga. The energy I get outweighs the sleep I lose.”

Be present and appreciate

- “I keep an appreciation journal and make sure that every day I write at least three things.”
- “*Notice* moments throughout the day and drink from them. Like noticing your child’s smile or an act of affection or hearing birds singing or the sweet sound of silence for just a moment.”
- “I offer a big hug to my son and just sink into it and stay there for a while.”
- “I do small, mental check-ins with myself.”