



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.