

Ask an Expert: Six Ways to Ditch Parent Guilt and Find Time for Self-Care

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Much of a parent's time is dedicated to caring for children, and it can be easy to neglect your own needs while prioritizing theirs. However, making time for yourself matters just as much as caring for others because neglecting your well-being can lead to parental burnout – and then no one benefits.

If incorporating self-care into your life feels overwhelming, or if you feel guilty about stepping away from your children, you are not alone. Unrealistic parenting expectations, work stress, and parenting culture can all contribute to guilt and burnout. The good news is that there are ways to cope through self-care.

Self-care includes activities that support your physical and mental well-being, help relieve stress, and improve overall health. By caring for yourself, you strengthen your well-being and become better equipped to care for your children.

Engaging in self-care can increase your ability to parent effectively. For example, mindfulness can improve emotional regulation. When disagreements arise, you may be able to respond more thoughtfully because you feel less stressed. Self-care can also improve emotional awareness and sensitivity to your child's feelings. As a result, you may feel greater compassion and strengthen the parent-child bond.

Consider these six ways to practice self-care and leave parenting guilt behind:

1. **Start small:** Self-care does not have to take an entire day. Simple activities such as staying hydrated, reading, or pursuing a hobby during a child's nap or school hours can also help reduce stress provide a boost. Spending time with friends and family.
2. **Build healthy habits:** Self-care is not one-size-fits-all. Find practices that work for you and build them into your routine. Journaling, yoga, exercise, and even laughter can all be effective forms of self-care.
3. **Schedule it:** Putting self-care on your calendar helps ensure it remains a priority. Set aside time each day for activities that bring you joy, and commit to those appointments just as you would any other important responsibility.
4. **Avoid comparisons:** Every parenting journey is unique. Comparing yourself to others often creates unnecessary pressure and can make parenting more stressful.
5. **Practice self-compassion:** Self-compassion means recognizing when you have struggled or made mistakes and responding with kindness instead of harsh self-judgment. Treat yourself as you would a close friend. Acknowledge your efforts, learn from challenges, and appreciate your willingness to grow.
6. **Practice self-forgiveness:** Self-forgiveness involves acknowledging without judgment your actions or feelings that did not align with your intentions. Give yourself space to process those emotions, let go of negativity, learn from the experience, and move forward.

Learning to balance parenting with caring for yourself can reduce stress and strengthen your relationship with your children. Start with small self-care practices and gradually build on what works for you.

See the [full article with additional resources](#).

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