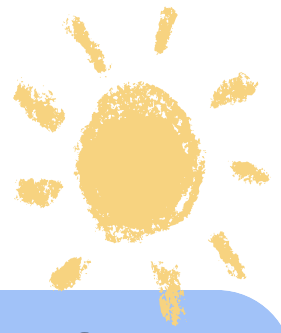


A Way of Being with Children

Practical Tools for Connection, Safety, and HOPE in Early Childhood



SELF-CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

Supporting Yourself While Supporting Children

Caring for young children is deeply meaningful and, at the same time, incredibly demanding. Caregivers manage many daily responsibilities, emotional demands, and ongoing needs - often leaving very little time to care for themselves and recharge. Over time, this stress can impact a caregiver's patience, energy, physical health, and emotional well-being. Self-care is not a luxury or a reward for "doing enough" - it is a necessity. When adults take time to regulate their own nervous systems, they are better able to show up with warmth, consistency, and hope. Caring for yourself sends a powerful message to children: your needs matter, my needs matter, and caring for ourselves helps us care for each other.

Self-Care Supports Children Too

Children's nervous systems are shaped by the adults around them. When caregivers are overwhelmed or depleted, it becomes harder for them to remain patient, respond calmly, and help their child regulate emotions. Children "borrow" their nervous system regulation from their safe, trusted caregivers which means that the more calm and collected you are, the more calm and grounded the child can be.

When caregivers prioritize their own well-being, they are more likely to:

- Stay grounded during challenging behavior
- Respond with empathy instead of reactivity
- Model healthy coping skills
- Create a sense of safety and stability

Self-care is a protective factor for caregivers themselves and the children in their care.



Skills & Practices for Everyday Self-Care

1. Build in Pause Moments

- Take short breaks throughout the day to breathe and reset. Even 30 seconds of slow breathing can help calm your nervous system.
- Pause before reacting - for yourself as much as for your child.

2. Create Simple Nourishing Routines

- Choose small, realistic practices you can return to regularly.
- Examples: a short walk, journaling, stretching, music, or quiet time.

3. Notice Your Emotional State

- Reflect on how stress, fatigue, or frustration shows up in your caregiving.
- Awareness helps you respond intentionally instead of automatically.

4. Practice Self-Compassion

- Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a friend. Compassion supports resilience.
- Replace self-criticism with kindness: "This is hard, and I'm doing my best."

5. Ask for and Accept Support

- You are not meant to do this alone.
- Reach out to trusted friends, family, or community supports.
- Connection is a powerful form of self-care.

A Way of Being Reminder

Caring for yourself is, in essence, also caring for your child. When caregivers nurture their own well-being consistently, they create a foundation of safety, connection, and hope that supports the whole family. There is an adage, “one cannot pour from an empty cup,” and it’s true. To be the best possible parent, you need to allow yourself time to relax and regulate regularly. Self-care is most effective when it becomes a way of being, not a one-time activity or occasional break. Children are always watching how adults manage stress, set boundaries, and care for themselves in everyday life. When self-care is woven into daily routines and schedules, it builds resilience, self-compassion, and healthy coping. This teaches children that self-care is important and that the family values and consistently practices it to promote overall health and well-being.

Everyday Reminders for Caregivers

Progress, Not Perfection

Self-care doesn’t have to be all-or-nothing. Small steps matter. Tiny moments of rest, movement, or reflection add up over time and support long-term well-being.

Community Is Care

Spending time with supportive adults helps regulate stress and build hope. Sharing experiences, asking for help, and feeling understood remind caregivers they are not alone; connection strengthens everyone.

Model Healthy Coping

Children learn by watching the adults around them. When they see caregivers pause, take breaks, express feelings, and ask for support, they learn that caring for physical and mental health is normal and important.

Check In With Yourself

- “What do I need right now?”
- “What would help me feel just a little better?”
- Even small adjustments can make a meaningful difference.

Rest Is Productive

Rest supports patience, problem-solving, and emotional balance. Ensuring you take time to rest and recover helps you show up more fully for your child.

Small Rituals Matter

Simple daily routines like a morning stretch, a deep breath before bedtime, and a warm cup of tea can become grounding anchors that support regulation and renewal.

Give Yourself Grace

Some days will be harder than others. Be gentle with yourself, especially during challenging moments. Self-compassion builds resilience. You don’t have to do everything perfectly to make a difference. Your presence, effort, and care already matter. Each small step you take to care for yourself strengthens your ability to care for your child. Be kind to yourself, keep showing up, and remember: you are not alone, and what you are doing truly makes a difference.



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