



The Balance Beam: Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Kids

Valuing the importance of taking care of yourself is an essential component of successful parenting. Life, work, and family commitments take a toll on all of us. We all have responsibilities that pull us in countless directions, making us feel stressed out, short-tempered, and, at times, overwhelmed.

For foster and adoptive parents, self-care becomes especially vital. The job you are doing comes with a number of complexities and challenges. In addition, you may experience secondary trauma, which is the emotional toll you experience from hearing about, seeing, and living with the trauma that kids bring with them when they come into care.

Because of the challenges, some families can reach a point where they feel the task is too difficult and the emotional cost too high. Before getting to the point of having to make such a large decision, we invite you to read on for tips and suggestions to weave some self-care strategies into your family's routine.

Keeping Your Cup Filled

We know it's often hard to fit one more thing into your incredibly busy day. And, it is true that self-care takes time. However, finding

time to taking care of ourselves is vital for every member of your family.

You may have heard the saying, "You cannot pour from an empty cup." It's true. You can only be your best self to take care for others when you are taken care of—when your cup is full. Self-care is all about finding ways to fill your cup.



Below you'll find some ideas that touch on each of these areas. Think about what might or what does work for you. Remember that what works for you may not work for everyone in your family and you each may need time to get into a new routine that includes self-care.

Tips for Taking Care of Yourself: Mind, Body, and Spirit

Mind

- **Honor yourself** by acknowledging that this work is hard and, if it were easier, more families would be adopting and fostering.
- **Take breaks!** Respite care is a valuable resource. Build a support system of caregivers who can step in when you feel that you're at your breaking point. Or tap into the system your agency has in place.
- **Participate in trainings** and conferences. Knowledge is power and provides you with additional parenting

Continued on page 2



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2353
West Allis, WI 53214
800-762-8063
info@coalitionforccyf.org

© 2012;
updated 2019

In partnership with:



resources.

- **Ask for help.** We all need help sometimes and it's more than okay to reach out when you're feeling overwhelmed—it's actually one of the strongest things you can do! Take advantage of supports from your agency (such as mentoring or more frequent contact from a caseworker), your circle of support, and from us at the Coalition. It's also okay to seek support from a therapist or counselor.
- **Join a support group**—either in person or online—or network with other foster and/or adoptive families. It can be very rewarding to share experiences with others who foster or have adopted. (Need help finding a connection? Contact us at the Coalition and we can point you in the right direction.)
- **Engage in a hobby or interest.** While you may feel there's little time for such luxuries, an activity that requires immersing your mind on a task or creating something that delights you can free your mind and help you feel more present later.
- **Meditate.** Practicing mindfulness and/or meditation is something that many people find helpful. Those who engage in this kind of activity say it brings them a sense of well-being, gratitude, and acceptance.



have special needs in your household. This may require planning a respite overnight for your children or yourself. Could you and your partner trade off nights? Or perhaps fit in some daily naps.

- **Movement** is known to relieve stress and improve health. Simply standing rather than sitting can be more beneficial than you might know! Yoga and many other kinds of exercise will improve your strength and flexibility. Yoga can have emotional and spiritual benefits, as well.
- **Massage** can be a tremendous stress reliever, and helps tissue heal. Touch has a power to heal like no other.
- **Laugh!** Turning upsetting events into funny moments is sometimes as simple as how we frame it. Most foster and adoptive parents say humor is essential.

Spirit

- **Lean on** and use your faith group if you belong to one.
- **Spiritual reading**, meditating, or praying on a regular basis can be renewing and put you in a frame of mind that will

help you cope when things feel challenging.

- **A spiritual retreat** could be rejuvenating for you and your partner, or for the whole family.
- **Let go of guilt.** Remember: there is no such thing as a perfect parent.

Body

- **Nutritious eating** is one of the biggest underpinnings of our immune system, and new research shows healthy eating is a major factor in our mental health. If you can do only one thing for your body, do this.
- **Getting enough sleep** can be challenging, especially with children who

Don't Forget the Kids

Remember to include kids in your family's self-care plans. Encourage the children in your care to participate in activities that fill their cups, too. It could be quiet reading time, a special program or movie they enjoy watching, sports or extra-curricular activities, or even some one-on-one time with Mom or Dad. Other suggestions include mindfulness

Continued on page 3



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2353
West Allis, WI 53214
800-762-8063
info@coalitionforcof.org

© 2012;
updated 2019

In partnership with:



training for kids, family digital downtime, or sessions with a therapist.

Parenting isn't an easy job. We want to encourage you to take time for *you* so that, when life throws you loops, you are fully charged and ready to lean into the curve. Contact us at info@coalitionforcyf.org or at 800-762-8063 if you need additional support. We're here to offer ideas or even just listen.



Resources

Tip Sheet

- [Stressed Out!](#)

From the [Lending Library](#)

- Fostering Across Wisconsin Newsletter: [Self-Care](#)

From the [FCARC Website](#)

- [Family Support Associations](#)

Additional Resources

- [Wisconsin Foster Care Handbook – Chapter 5 – Self Care](#)
- [Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association](#)
- [What Do You Do to Keep Your Emotional Well from Running Dry?](#) (*In Fostering Perspectives; includes many relevant book titles*)



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2353
West Allis, WI 53214
800-762-8063
info@coalitionforcyf.org

© 2012;
updated 2019

In partnership with:

