

SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS

Self-Care for Parents

Being a parent comes with its own set of challenges, but being a SEND parent comes with much different ones that are often stressful, time-consuming, and energy-zapping.

We spend our lives;

- ▶ Ensuring our children's needs are met
- ▶ Keeping on top of appointments with professionals, therapists, EHCP annual reviews
- ▶ Chasing up appointments or responses
- ▶ Fighting for their needs to be acknowledged entirely and supported
- ▶ Looking after our other children
- ▶ Making sure that there is enough of their safe foods (food that they consider safe and will eat) in the freezer or cupboards
- ▶ Keeping track of medication and repeat prescriptions
- ▶ Staying up half the night because your child seems to be allergic to sleep
- ▶ And so many more that are personal to each of us.

We put our children's, and our whole family's needs, above our own most of the time, and we can sometimes lose who we are in the running of day-to-day life. Self-care is often very far down on our priority list because we either simply do not have the time, space, or energy to do it when so many other things need to get done.

SO, WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is taking care of yourself. Doing things for yourself that alleviate stress or anxiety or just gives you a moment to catch your breath and treat yourself. This doesn't mean that you are selfish or self-indulgent at all. We all need to look after ourselves so that we can carry on dealing with our daily lives and stresses. You may be thinking that this involves locking yourself in the bathroom for 5 minutes and eating a bar of chocolate without having to share it or hiding in the cupboard under the stairs with a bottle of wine. But there are healthier ways to take care of yourself.

It is important to know when you are stressed, feel overwhelmed and not coping and in need of help - help and support is available if needed.

So here is a list of different self-care activities that can be done in a very short time to help you to stay mentally, emotionally, and spiritually healthy because, if we don't stay fit and healthy, then our children are the one's who will end up paying the price when we become stressed, overwhelmed and unable to cope anymore.



Meditate

This doesn't mean you need to bend your legs in impossible positions and spend hours chanting or humming (I'm relatively new to meditation). This is where you get into a comfortable position (sitting, laying down, whichever makes you most comfortable), performing breathing exercises and clearing your head. Even 5 minutes of meditation can reduce stress levels and make you feel more relaxed. If you are new to meditation, you can do lots of guided meditations from Apps on your phone to YouTube.



Nature

It is a scientific fact that spending time outdoors around nature makes you feel more relaxed. This could be a walk through the woods, taking a walk around your local park, or even spending a quiet 10 minutes in your garden. This also works with having lots of plants in your house.



Listening to music

Playing music that you really like helps to raise your mood and relax you. It doesn't matter what kind of music it is (though preferably uplifting music rather than something that makes you feel sad and low). If it makes you dance around with no one watching, it is even better, as this increases your body's dopamine (happy hormone) levels.



Engage your senses

Light a scented candle and have a good smell, or put on some soothing lighting, take a hot bath, or drink some herbal tea.



Schedule time for yourself

I know how busy we often are but carving out some time for yourself in the day/week does the power of good for your wellbeing, and it's not selfish; it's self-care.



Schedule time with friends

Catch up with a friend that makes you smile or laugh.

Take a step away from social media and emails

Social media is a wonderful thing in that we can stay in touch with people we care about. However, it is also packed with a lot of paranoia, doom and gloom, arguments a plenty, and pressure to be 'present' all the time to respond to comments or emails. Taking a break for a couple of days will help you let your mind unwind and relax.



Hug someone

These release endorphins that make you feel calmer and more relaxed. So, find someone and give them a good squeeze!

Smile

Stay with me here... there is a thing called 'smile therapy' that actually works. If you spend 5 minutes with a full smile on your face, it makes you feel happier. I've tried it, and it works!

Spend an extra 5 minutes in the bath/shower

Take some extra time for yourself, use that lovely smelling soap or bath bomb that you were given as a present and never got around to using. Pamper yourself a little.

Eat properly

I know it's so easy to live off of coffee and biscuits when you spend your life running around, but eating healthily will give you more energy and make you feel a lot better in yourself.

Escape into a book

Even if it's just one chapter when you go to bed or when you have 5-10 minutes to yourself.

Learn how to say No

You don't have to be a Super parent who says yes to every invite or opportunity that comes up. Learn to say no to reduce the number of things you are juggling.

Learn how to share

If there is someone available and willing to help you do things, let them take some of the load off you.

If these strategies do not help, and you are still struggling, please contact your GP for support or referral to counselling service. Do not walk this journey alone! Help and support is available

