

Looking After Yourself

It is a tough job being the parent of a young child. Parents tend to put their children first and themselves second (or third or fourth or fifth!) However, parents parent more effectively when they attend to their own needs as well as those of their children. Here are a few tips for making sure that you are the best person you can be – for you, and for your children.

Eat well

Not to lose weight, not to gain weight – just to be healthy. Everything in moderation. Food is fuel – what you put in to your body affects how you think, feel and act.

Exercise

Not to lose weight, or gain muscle – just to be healthy. Do something you enjoy – walk, cycle, run, go to the gym, box, dance, swim. Whatever you like! Just get yourself out of the house and moving a few times a week.

Sleep

Make sure you get enough. This is often difficult for parents with young children, particularly if the children do not sleep well. If that is the case, prioritise sleep for your child and yourself. Sleep is where we recharge our batteries. Tired parents do not parent to the best of their ability.

Connect with others and maintain your relationships

Make sure you connect with others regularly. Call somebody, go walking with somebody, have coffee, lunch or dinner with somebody. Have a date night with your partner if you have one. Go on a girls /boys night out. Anything. Just make sure you connect with other people.

Relaxation

Relaxation, mindfulness and meditation are extremely important for one's mental health. If you click on the Relaxation Room tab on the Home Page, you will be presented with a range of relaxation exercises that you can download and use. Alternatively, there are a number of Apps available for smartphones that focus on mindfulness, relaxation and meditation. Two of the Apps we recommend are Headspace and Smiling Mind. Relaxation, mindfulness and meditation can be done at anytime and anywhere, and can be invaluable for a parent's mental health. Try them!

Take time for you

Parents of young children are time poor and tend to put others (particularly their children) before themselves. It is important that you reclaim some time, even if it is only a little bit of time and something small. Examples include:

- Have a bubble bath
- Take a walk
- Read a book
- Go back to a hobby you had pre-children
- Take up a new hobby
- Watch that movie you've been meaning to watch

