



## Taking Care of Yourself is a ParentingWell® Priority

Taking care of yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a parent. Your children need you to be as well as possible. You need to know yourself to take care of yourself—to establish a routine, to know when you might be stressed, and to develop effective self care strategies. Parents often have to work hard to find the time and energy to do something for themselves. You may feel guilty or neglectful of your children in the process. Identify what works best for you—something that doesn’t conflict with your children’s needs or their safety.

A self care strategy helps you feel better. What works for one person does not necessarily work for another. For example, you may find it relaxing after a tough day at work to come home and watch television for 30 minutes. To your friend this may seem anything but relaxing – she may enjoy taking a hot bath or talking on the phone.

Not all strategies for helping us feel better are healthy or safe. Some strategies may make you feel better temporarily, but may have negative consequences for you and those around you. Relying on alcohol is an example of something that may not work well for you or your family over time, especially if you drink too much.

Here is a list of some negative self care strategies. Write down others that come to mind, along with their possible outcomes.

**Negative Self Care Strategy**

drinking alcohol  
abusing drugs  
binging on food  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible Consequences**

lack of control, addiction, vulnerability  
arrest, addiction, being unsafe  
weight gain, poor body image, health risks  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Positive self care strategies add to your health and well-being, not jeopardize it. Building positive strategies into your daily routine shows your children you are taking care of yourself. You can help your children discover healthy ways to take care of themselves, too. Some examples of everyday activities that may help you feel better are reading for pleasure, exercising, listening to music, dancing, playing with a pet, cooking a great meal, or participating in a faith community.

Generate a list of activities that help you feel better, and exactly how they make you feel.

**Positive Self Care Strategy**

doing a crossword puzzle  
exercising, taking a walk  
joining in a religious activity  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**This makes me feel:**

relaxed, calm, smart  
energized, good about my body, healthy  
spiritual, involved in a community, centered  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Keep this list where it’s easy to find. Look at it when you are feeling anxious or stressed. Share it with family and friends, so they can help you remember to take good care of yourself.