

Looking after yourself – Mums

My guess is, you're probably in one of two camps

- Looking for the quick and simple solution because you're near wits end,
- Or the other camp who stumbled across this article in disbelief. Let's call you: 'Are you frickin kidding me?' Look after myself? I'm a Mum!

As mums we often prioritise everything and everybody before ourselves.

So first up, recognise you still matter! It's just like our airlines tell us – put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others with theirs!

What the science tells us

Sorry to be so earnest, but sometimes we need convincing, actually Mums always need convincing to take time out (to relax!). Quality 'down' time means you are giving your brain permission to increase levels of the chemicals which produce dopamine and serotonin making you feel more positive. When we just keep on going and so-called 'sucking it up', we end up increasing our levels of stress. In turn we become irritated with our children, less wanting to play, cuddle and praise them, which are essential ingredients for enjoyment and maintaining great relationships with your kids, not to mention your partner!

There are two ways to recharge and keep emotionally healthy - doing something relaxing on your own or doing something enjoyable with others. (The Science of Parenting)

There are 5 things we can do which contribute to a positive overall wellbeing, and before you get all 'I don't have time for this' these are simple and fast ways to implement even when busy and even with kids.

These are:

Give – your time, your skills, your words

- Tick! You're already doing plenty of that as a Mum.
- But many mums (goodness knows how) spend some time volunteering for Plunket, their children's schools and sports/activities clubs and community activities – know that these are great for you (and your child), and also great for connecting with others. Which leads us to:

Connect with others

- Make a date with other mums at the park,
- Join some groups - Plunket groups, playgroups, your child's school parent group or PTA's are great ways to find other parents with the same aged children, for play dates ask the parent around to join you for a coffee/catch up, book clubs, parenting courses - the great secret about parenting courses is they're places you meet other parents who are experiencing the same things as you and friendships develop inside of the group! In all of these places where you meet parent, foster these networks. The best people to connect with are those that you come away from feeling replenished, secure and/or energised.
- Connect with your partner – just make some time for each other with or without the kids (family time is important too, and memory making for your kids). Have an in-home date night, put that phone away sometimes!

Exercise (don't stop reading because you saw that word and immediately decided this is not the webpage for you!)

- we often talk about exercising as "moving your mood" and this is true for your children too, so include them! - go for a walk, scooter ride, bike ride, swim – you'll all feel better for it.

Learn new things

- Visit new places (with our without kids) - art gallery, museum, park, gardens, beaches, another suburb.
- Try something new with your kids – that string game, Sudoku, yoga following a book from the library or YouTube clip, that science experiment the kids have been talking about – being interested in what they're interested in helps you connect too – win, win!

Notice the little things, be present and stay in the moment

- Get down on the floor and play with your child – be present and in the moment with them for just 10-15 minutes a day. It will make a lot of difference for them and you.
- Stop and take notice of the things they see – they often point out things we don't even notice. Stop and enjoy this mini-break with them.
- Try breathing exercises or yoga with or without your kids. We recommend [Sitting Still like a Frog](#) which is at the library – this is a fantastic way for you and your kids to learn about relaxation and self calming (they can use this when they are upset or frightened).

Looking after yourself – Mums

Outside of kid time – and how to get some!

Accept help when it's offered! Think of all the times you've been told "if you ever want me to take the kids for a bit, just let me know." People actually like to help – they filling up their kindness buckets – it's good for them, and good for you!

The great work-life balance myth...

- The simple truth is that work is a part of life – the two can't remain separate – when we're at work, we are still living! Well, one would hope! Erik Erikson was an American psycho-analyst (much like Freud) and we love what he said about it all: "The richest and fullest lives attempt to achieve an inner balance between three realms – work, love and play."

What's cool about this?

- It allows the areas of our lives to cross over into each other – we can play at work – joke with our colleagues and laugh at the funny things that happen, and if we use the definition of love to mean; admire and enjoy, then this can be apparent with our colleagues and clients.
- It gives us permission to take that work call sometimes at home, or answer the email – if our children understand we give them attention, and we give work attention too, they're likely to understand.
- It takes the pressure off us – we don't have to resent our work, but see it contributing positively in some ways.
- And bear in mind too – many times our children LOVE describing what their parents do, their job. They're proud of that – involve them in it as you can.

Super parenting tips that can give fast results and give you time!

- Have a plan around the things that stress you out (especially with kids) eg grocery shopping or not taking them with you.
- Pick your battles, don't be sensitive and remember your kids love you even if they say they don't.
- Learn about your child's age and stage – sometimes we're just expecting a wee bit much.
- Have consistent routines ([see our charts](#)) and family rules.
- Spend 10-15 minutes playing with your children every day.

Your to-do list for today (and everyday if need be):

- Be kind to yourself! If you wouldn't say it to another Mum, don't tell it to yourself.
- Give up comparing yourself to others and lower your bar.
- Eat and sleep (or rest) as well as your kids do.
- Ask for help – from your partner, friends, family and professional supports – often you don't realize how many people have got your back.
- Pamper yourself - a haircut, a long shower or bath, a rub of lipstick.
- Play and have fun! Let it go. I said, let it go!
- And just breathe!