

## Self-Care when Parenting Harder to Parent Kids

1. "Selfcare" or "take care of yourself" are overused but still vitally important terms for foster, adoptive, and kinship parents.
2. Why do all parents but especially parents of kids who've experienced trauma need to practice self-care?
3. What is secondary trauma?
4. Why are kids who've experience neglect, abuse and other childhood traumas harder to parent?
  - a. Challenging Behaviors
  - b. Learning disabilities
5. The busyness of foster and adoptive parenting.
  - a. So many appointments (therapy, OT, tutoring, doctors, IEP meetings, social workers, birth family visits, etc.)
  - b. Helping with education-homework struggles.
  - c. Dealing with the emotional fallout from early life trauma.
6. What are some of the barriers to taking care of ourselves as adoptive, foster or kinship parents?
  - a. Our identity is tied up in being a care giver not a "care taker" of ourselves.
  - b. May be uncomfortable being on the receiving end of care. May make us feel weak or needy.
  - c. The belief that other people have it worse and we don't have the right to complain.
  - d. Help when it is offered is often vague: "Call me if you need anything."
  - e. Not sure what we need to make things easier.
7. The importance of respite care and the barriers to parents using it.
8. Practical ideas for providing self-care.
  - a. Give yourself permission to need something. You are worthy of being cared for and you are more likely to be able to meet the needs of your family if you take care of yourself.
  - b. Say "no" to more responsibility. You don't have to be the girl scout leader. Store bought cookies are just fine for the bake sale. Say yes to something that would be fun, (going for walk, girl's or guy's night out)
  - c. Set a routine to your day.
  - d. Make sure that you have one thing you look forward to each day.
  - e. Think small when thinking self-care.
    - i. Getting in bed 30 minutes earlier each night with Netflix.
    - ii. Saturday morning coffee with your partner while the kids chill with cartoons.
    - iii. Soaking in a hot tub while older kids clean the kitchen. (And lower your standards on what constitutes "clean").

- f. Ask for help and accept it when offered. If someone offers to help, say “yes” and suggest something specific. Ex. A meal on Wednesday night. Babysitting or taking a child to the movies once a month.
- g. Parent Support groups