

Because You Can't Pour from an Empty Vessel



If you know a career woman with family responsibilities who is struggling to find time and energy for self-care, read on!

About 30 years ago, I devoured a Newsweek article highlighting that women spend, on average, 17 years in primary childcare and 18 years caring for elderly parents (theirs and/or their spouse's). In my 30s, that seemed daunting to me. It went on to discuss how those 17- and 18-year timespans overlap so that from the time of the birth of their first child until the death of their last parent, women served as active caretakers – and by then they were considered elderly themselves!

Since then, we have witnessed an incremental shift in traditional gender roles. Studies show that women have continued to increase their entrance rates into the career world, while men have increased their involvement in household and childcare duties. Despite this good news, it turns out 81% of all caregivers today, both formal and informal, are women. At present, women assume as much as 50% more time and responsibility taking care of kids, partners, parents and friends. I'm guessing this comes as a surprise to no one!

Culturally, female caregivers tend to exhibit empathy and nurture. When it comes to caring for family, they often put their own needs on the back burner while attending to the needs of their people – especially their children. If this sounds like you, I'm here to remind you about the importance of your **self-care**.

Self-care is for YOU. Because YOUR health matters. That includes your physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and financial self. And ... self-care is for OTHERS, because you simply can't pour from an empty vessel when you're trying to take care of others!

Life-enhancing self-care includes daily movement, good nutrition, clean hydration, whitespace (recreation) and, yes, even SLEEP (think quantity *and* quality). It also includes connection with friends, seeking *healthcare* (not just *sickcare*), keeping current with preventive health visits and flossing your teeth (of course).

Perhaps your internal defenses are up, and you're chanting the caregiver's mantra: "There is no way! I just don't have time for all of that!" I want to remind you that we all have the same 24 hours in a day. Healthy people arrange their time differently – and you can too!

Think about doing some of these activities *while* you're caring for your family:

Teach kids to food-*prep* and cook. Exercise *with* your kids. Carve out time for reading, being in nature, and visiting with your friends and neighbors.

Remember that kids are really good at mimicking – including adopting the healthy lifestyle behaviors you exemplify. So, taking care of YOU is serving them well also.

For more ideas of families engaging *together* in health-enhancing self-care, check out "Brave Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy Kids (Against All Odds) in Today's World" at BeABraveParent.com.



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