

Tips for Finding Time for Self while Raising Grandchildren

Taking care of your grandchildren can sometimes seem to take all your time and energy. However, in order to take good care of them, it is important to take care of yourself as well. You will always fall short of time for yourself, unless you intentionally plan time for your own self. This may seem okay most of the time, however, you can end up feeling resentful of those in your care and may not be able to be your best. If you are feeling drained, unappreciated about all you do or feeling useless, then it may be time to make a self-care plan.

Here are some simple tips that come from Holly Tiret, an Extension Specialist with Michigan State University Extension.

1. Make a “to-do” list every day. Begin with the hardest, most unpleasant task first. This leaves time to get easier, more enjoyable things done later. Be sure to put at least 15 minutes of “me time” to do whatever you want time on the list. It would be nice to have a lot of time, but begin with 15 minutes. It can be anything such reading, quiet time, listening to music, or anything.
2. Delegate tasks. Just because you are the grandparent, doesn’t mean you have to do everything. Children who do chores learn that they are important as well as showing how a family functions as a group. Chores help them learn responsibilities and how to take care of themselves, others, and things as well. After all, someday they will have to do their own laundry, clean their own toilets and cook.
3. Learn to say “No.” Be conservative about how you spend your time. Avoid feeling pressured into quick decisions, say: “Let me check my calendar and get back with you. Then get back with them. Be sure you are only agreeing to things you enjoy and have meaning to you.
4. De-clutter and get organized. The saying is true, “There is a place for everything.” Sometimes our stress comes from being in a hurry and not being able to find your purse, car keys, permissions slips, and appointment cards. Having your grandchildren live with you means more stuff to keep track of, yours and theirs. Decide on a filing system for important papers and forms, get and use a family bulletin board or calendar to keep track of activities and appointments. When it comes to picking up clutter, look around you. Go through one room at a time. Make three piles: keep, throw away and donate. It is amazing how quickly things can pile up. You may want to do this every month or two.
5. Find a support group. You may not realize it, but many people are in the same situation as you. A grandparent raising a grandchild. Although the reasons may be different, you may find you share many of the same thoughts, feelings, challenges and joys that others do. It can be comforting just to have someone else to talk to who understands. You may find yourself comforting someone else too.
6. Learn some relaxation techniques. This may include: deep breathing exercises, yoga, Tai chi, walking, biofeedback, and even medication if necessary. If it becomes too stressful and you don’t feel yourself getting any better, please seek counseling or professional help.