

Yogi
times™

lifestyle for the modern yogi
april 2008 issue 61



OUR CHILDREN, OURSELVES

embracing our life force

making time for mom

by renée peterson trudeau

nurturing the maternal soul

“Self care is not about self-indulgence. It’s about self-preservation.”—Audrey Lorde

Having a child changes you on a cellular level. How you see, feel and think about everything in your life—relationships, career, spirituality, success, friendships, love, self—shifts. You have joined a club that has a lifetime membership, and you will never be exactly the same “you” as you were before baby. These changes rouse many new insights and challenges. One of the biggest being how you find time to care for yourself and stay connected to “who you are,” while also nurturing your child.

Growing up as the oldest of seven children, I remember mornings in our household being extremely hectic. My harried mom scrambling to make lunches, dad running around looking for tennis shoes and invariably one of the seven of us in the kitchen cooking some strange breakfast concoction. One morning, my nine-year-old brother Kert decided to whip up some pecan waffles. As I reached for the waffle maker to fix myself breakfast, I bumped the edge of the hot grill and scorched my elbow. Hours later I found myself sitting in my classroom at school, trying to ignore the pain from the brown, bubbly burn on my arm. Rather than ask a teacher for a bandage, I simply endured the discomfort thinking silently, “It’s not important enough to bother anyone. I’ll be fine.” Self-care was not something that was taught or promoted in my family. As is true for many of us, it was something I would instead have to learn and experiment with on my own.

When you think about self-care, you may have visions of pedicures, facials or other activities that can be perceived as indul-



gent. While pampering yourself can be a part of self-care, the term as a whole occupies a much larger and more influential territory directly affecting your well-being. Self-care is about nurturing yourself on all levels—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually—so you can live, love and parent optimally. By replacing the inner critic, desire for perfection and any guilt you may be holding onto with acceptance, support and empowerment, you can summon new energy into your life. Creating time to explore yourself, your passions and your relationships inspires fulfillment at its deepest levels. By inviting in much-needed rest and downtime to refuel, you will find yourself equipped with even more to give to your children.

Recently, my friend Megan—mom to Mateo, three, and Alea, one—shared how frustrated she had been feeling. Exhausted from staying up until 2 a.m. the night before to do laundry, she had skipped breakfast, lunch and was currently surviving on nothing more than coffee. Emotionally worn down, she had been beating herself up all day for not getting a homemade meal over to a neighbor who had recently lost a parent. As Megan and I visited, we both recognized we would never dream of treating our children the way we so often treat ourselves. Denying them of sleep, nourishment or their emotional needs would be heartbreaking. Yet, as mothers, we deny ourselves of these very needs on a daily basis. A truth often overlooked, we need and deserve the same love, gentle care and compassion we so generously offer our little ones.

To begin nurturing yourself, make self-renewal exercises a part of your everyday routine. Below are some ideas you can implement to start caring for yourself and replenishing your well.

physical care

- Nourish your body by eating foods that make you feel great.
- Get enough sleep, and drink plenty of water.
- Exercise to replenish your energy and manage stress.
- Take time to nurture your body through baths or massage.

emotional care

- Have a heart-to-heart with a close friend or mentor.
- Think kind, loving thoughts about yourself.
- Utilize a therapist, coach, social worker or counselor if you need support.
- Journal—write down your feelings and thoughts without judgment.
- Make time to go out on an exciting date, either alone or with your partner.
- Nurture your social life (try organizing a monthly girls’ night out).

spiritual care

- Spend time in nature.
- Meditate, pray or reflect on the things you are grateful for.
- Get out and do something creative: paint, draw, write, dance, sing!
- Volunteer for a cause that inspires you.

mental care

- Read a good book or see an intellectually stimulating movie.
- Learn a new hobby or skill.
- Sign up for a class, group or workshop that interests you.
- Challenge yourself to learn something new.



for some extra tips
on self-nourishment
visit yogitimes.com

Almost any mother will share with you how pervasive ideals like, “Good mothers always put their families first; motherhood is pure bliss, or good mothers are completely selfless” abound in our society. These beliefs run deep and can have a profound impact on how we view our roles as mothers and women. The concept of self-care may feel foreign at first, but after you taste the benefits of focusing on yourself, you will realize how important it is for self-preservation. Ideally you’ll begin to schedule time for self-nurturing in the same way you do dentist and doctors appointments. With practice, you will find that self-care is an integral part of emotional balance and that by putting on your oxygen mask before helping others, you can become wiser and more effective in all areas of your life.

The journey to making your self-care a priority doesn’t happen overnight. Many women who initially equate self-care with selfishness may require a shift in perspective to make it an everyday practice. Be gentle, compassionate and understanding with yourself, acknowledging you are doing the best you can wherever you are on your journey. Be sure to surround yourself with friends and supporters who believe in the importance of self-care to remain empowered along the way. Then, sit back and open up to the many wonderful, self-expanding opportunities awaiting your discovery. ●

To start or join a women’s self-renewal circle or to receive monthly life balance tips visit reneetrudeau.com.