



Co-Parenting: Investing in Yourself

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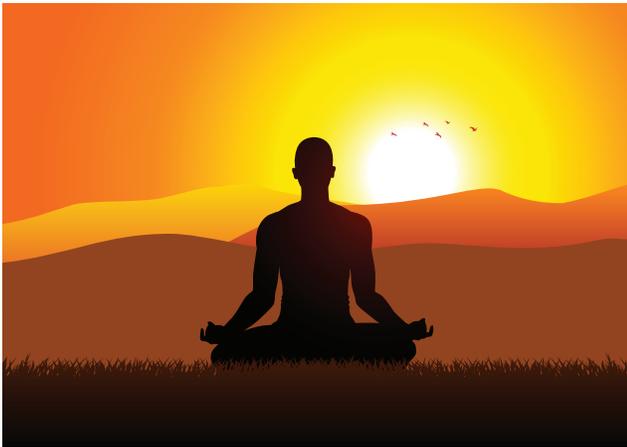
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Co-Parenting for Resilience



The experience of divorce can cause many negative feelings like grief, loss, anxiety and anger. Some individuals attempt to stay busy to avoid experiencing those negative feelings. With so many changes, finding time for self care might feel impossible or selfish, but it is one of the best gifts you can give your children. Investing in yourself means taking the time to care for yourself, to be a healthier version of you. Just like depositing money into the bank is investing, every time you do something for your physical, emotional or mental health, it is a deposit into your self-care bank and is an investment in yourself. The following self-care options are ways to begin investing in yourself and improve your physical and mental health.

Balance Your Health

Exercise is one of the easiest ways to quickly boost your mood. Exercising naturally produces positive hormones that lower stress and anxiety and boosts not only physical health, but also emotional and mental health. Research shows that maintaining a well-balanced diet and getting eight to 10 hours of adequate sleep can also dramatically improve well-being.

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Socialize

A great way to increase positive feelings is by joining a group of people with shared common interests. Likewise, consider signing up for a class or workshop to learn something new. During difficult times, it is easy to isolate oneself and allow negative emotions that can be overwhelming. Opportunities to socialize can counteract negative feelings and increase your emotional health.

Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is the ability to find value and appreciation in the things you have, rather than focusing on what has been lost or what you do not have. According to research, practicing gratitude is one of the most powerful, cheapest and easiest ways to increase happiness. Gratitude can be found in the smallest of moments, and the more we look for gratitude, the more we are capable of recognizing it in every day occurrences. Challenge yourself to find three different things you are grateful for each day. Try this activity with your children by spending five minutes at bedtime discussing the three things you are each grateful for that day. Expressing gratitude to others increases closeness and connection in relationships and has many positive mental health effects. What are you grateful for today?

Meditation and Mindfulness

Meditation is a proven technique to lower anxiety, stress, depression and improve physical health. There is not one right way to meditate and it does not require much time. There are phone apps, online videos and other free resources to get started. Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present in the moment, rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Too often, our minds wander, and we are not fully present with people. Reflecting on the past, or worrying about the future increases anxiety and depression and decreases the quality of interactions with others.

Self Compassion

Self compassion is treating yourself with the love and kindness you would give others. Oftentimes, we tend to treat others with more compassion and love than we show ourselves.

Self-Care Ideas When You Only Have 10 Minutes

Self care does not have to take a lot of time. Practicing self-care daily, even if for only a few minutes, can be impactful to your health.

Below are ideas that require just 10 minutes or less to complete:

- **Dance.** Turn on your favorite song and dance by yourself or have your children join in on the fun.
- **Start a compliment log.** Write down the compliments other people give you so when you are feeling low, you can reflect back on the nice things people have said.
- **Watch a funny video.** Watch a funny video online to lighten your mood and have a good laugh.
- **Take a spa bath.** A hot bath is relaxing to the body.
- **Smell something pleasant.** Aromatherapy has positive physical and mental benefits.
- **Cloud watch.** Relax and watch the sky. Some Vitamin D from the sun is a great mood booster.
- **Write a letter.** Write a letter to yourself. What do you need to hear right now? If your friend were in this situation, what would you say? Say that to you!
- **Say something nice.** Self-affirmations are free and take seconds. Look yourself in the mirror and say something nice to yourself!
- **Just breathe.** Close your eyes, inhale in a deep breath through your nose, hold it for few seconds, release and repeat.



The ability to truly love another person begins with the ability to truly love one's self.

Make Time for Fun

Bring out your inner child with play. Play brings joy, stress relief and builds connection in relationships. Challenge yourself to learn something new! Research shows that learning increases optimism, the ability to cope with stress, improves self-esteem and instills hope and purpose in life. Think about the things that truly bring you joy and make a list. Having a list allows you to select an activity even when negative feelings challenge your motivation. Some common ways to have fun include reading a book, coloring, playing with pets, going to the park with your children or completing a DIY project or craft.

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