

7

TOP TIPS
for
self-care
— AS A —
SPECIAL NEEDS
PARENT

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Self-care has been at the forefront of my journey as a special needs parent.

I wanted to whittle down what I have learned to my top 7 tips and share them because I know how important they have been for me in my daily life.

1

Speak your truth

To ease into the real world practice of speaking your truth, here are 4 simple steps that have been helpful to me.

- A Listen to your inner voice and identify what you really want to say. Practice saying it to yourself in front of the mirror or as a voice memo into your phone.
- B Write down what you want to say on a piece of paper, in your journal, or as a note in your phone.
- C Practice saying it to yourself again. But this time without apologizing.
- D If you still aren't ready to say exactly what you need to say, practice speaking up about something else that isn't as uncomfortable or where there is less at stake.

2

Just Say No

Learning to say no to the things that don't serve me has not been easy for me. It's always a struggle for me to tell someone no.

- A When a request comes in, take a pause before blurting out an answer. If it seems awkward, just respond, "Let me think about this for a minute."
- B In your head, identify how you THINK you should answer. Is this in alignment with how you REALLY want to answer?
- C If your answer doesn't match with the expected or preferred one, affirm to yourself (inwardly) that you are here to take care of yourself.
- D If guilt starts to creep in, repeat this mantra: "What's good for me is good for the universe."



Release The Guilt

Self-care is often equated with selfishness. This comes from a mentality that all of us can't have our needs met at the same time. This is an extremely limiting belief that needs to shift. How do I release guilt around taking care of myself?

- A** Continue the practice of self-care, even when it feels uncomfortable.
- B** Without apology, share your self-care practice with others. Start by telling someone who you know would praise your choice.
- C** Take a breath. Repeat to yourself: Self-care is not indulgent or decadent. It is a necessity for myself, and others around me, to flourish.

4

Receive Help

Receiving help from others has been one of the biggest lessons for me as a mother. I **never want to be seen as a taker** or as someone who can't figure out life on their own. Learning to receive help and acknowledging that I am not being selfish or greedy is a daily practice for me.

- A** Start asking for help in small ways. Practice this a few times a day. This can be with friends, family, or a stranger at the grocery store. Sit with how it feels to ask for help.
- B** When someone offers to help, take a pause. My go-to answer is typically, "No, I got it." But why am I saying no? Is it because I really want to accomplish the task on my own OR is it because I don't want to "take" anything from anyone else?
- C** Practice saying YES when people offer to help. Start small. For example: "Okay, yes, actually, would you pick me up some cough drops while you're at the store?"

5

Let go of Expectations

How do I practice being in the WHAT IS instead of the WHAT IF right now? When I find myself living in anxiety and worry around my child's future—Will she have fulfilling relationships? Can she live on her own? Will she ever be able to brush her own hair?—
I take a **breath and get centered**.

- A** What is my exact worry? What is taking me away from the present moment?
- B** What can I do about my specific worry right now? Is there an action step right in this moment or is this worry outside of my control?
- C** Am I having anxiety about my child's future because I've identified what would be important to him / her? Or is it only important to me?
- D** Take a breath. Let Go. Say to yourself: Everything will be okay.

6

Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable

One of my **biggest challenges** has been reacting and responding to the unpredictabilities of my child's behavior and actions. My child doesn't have a filter—whatever she's thinking quickly flows out of her mouth, and usually loudly. Her body moves the way it wants, and I often feel the urge to intervene.

- A** What exactly is making me uncomfortable about my child's behavior? Is it because others are reacting or responding in a judgmental or non-accepting way?
- B** Why do I care what other people think? Is this a reflection on how they consider me as a mother? Why does this bother me?
- C** Practice sitting in the uncomfortable moments without apology to those who might be offended or uncomfortable with my child's behavior.
- D** Repeat to self: My child is perfect, whole, and complete exactly as SHE IS. Likewise, I am perfect, whole, and complete exactly as I AM.



Find your Joy

Joy can show up in so many forms.
Here are some tips I use to stay connected
to the experience of joy in my life.

- A** Close your eyes, take a deep inhale and a slow exhale.
- B** What is my body, soul, and spirit telling me today?
What does it need?
- C** Visualize a joyful day/week/month/season.
What does it look like?
- D** In your journal or in the notes section of your phone, start writing down everything that joy looks like from this exercise. Maybe it's cooking for friends, roller skating, booking a trip, taking a nap, cancelling a "to do" that can wait, reading a book, being of service to others.

Self-care is a lifelong practice for me.

I am grateful to share the tips that
have helped me on this journey.

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