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Managing Thoughts and Emotions

Parents have the toughest job in the world. One filled with worry, frustration, the demands of multitasking and balancing work, home, marriage and family – it is easy to be overwhelmed! You need to take a moment here and breathe. I know the list I provided is extensive, but don't let that overwhelm you even further. Think about what your goals are for the summer. What do you want for them and your family as a whole; what do you want for yourself? The goal is usually some quality family time that allows bonding and the creation of vivid memories that will last your child's lifetime. When the kids get antsy and you feel like you are at your wits end, tell yourself that you can handle this! Prioritize what is important and what isn't; what's in your control and what isn't. Kids are experts at pushing our buttons and manipulating to get what they want. Keep your patience and remember to keep your sense of humor. It is amazing how you can use a one liner to diffuse many situations! We can only do our best with what we have – so go easy on yourself. After all, you made it through many summers growing up without being entertained at every turn or killing your siblings! Have fun and love your kids – everything else will fall into place.

Shed the guilt. It is important that you don't neglect yourself. Parents tend to put everyone else's needs before their own. If you don't take time for yourself, you will lose yourself (and perhaps your sanity too). Take time to socialize with your friends, go to the gym, see a movie, and pursue your interests. I know it is difficult to remove yourself from home when you have so much to do and have so little time with your kids during the work week as it is; but put yourself first once in a while. You can't take care of everyone else if you don't take care of yourself, and that includes your needs that will nurture and maintain your sanity! Taking care of you first will allow you to take care of your family, and all of the other priorities in life – just like when you are on an airplane and they instruct you to put the oxygen mask over yourself first and then your children. You will not be able to help your family if you are not able to function.

It's okay to set up activities for your kids so that you get some much needed you time. Utilize your support system. We all need people that can loan us a shoulder or their time and help if need be. Even super heroes need help once and a while. On that same note, don't be a control freak! Learn to delegate responsibilities...so what if your husband doesn't separate the lights from the darks...by allowing him to help you, now you have time to relax in the tub for a half hour! If your mom offers to take the kids to karate class, let her; take your friends up on their offers to help out by arranging play dates or sleep overs. It's a win-win-free childcare, your kids are entertained and you can use that time to do something else.

Speaking of doing something else (sorry, I couldn't resist)...don't forget your husband. (And husbands, don't forget your wives!) In the midst of the daily chaos of this beautiful thing called life, it is very easy to neglect, not only your needs, but that of your husband's. As a therapist, I can't tell you how many times I have heard that husbands are jealous of their kids because they get all of mom's attention (this does not mean they didn't want or don't love their kids – it means they miss connecting with their wife on a deeper level). It is important to keep your marriage healthy; it is the very foundation of your family. Your family was born out of the love, nurturing and intimacy that you feel towards one another. Just as you want and need to feel appreciated, so does he. Take the time to talk, appreciate each other, have fun and indulge in each other. Do not lose yourselves as a couple – keep that intimacy alive – If you are thinking you are too tired for sex – make an effort to get over it! Chances are – ten minutes into some foreplay, your heart rate will be up (who needs the gym?!), you'll be breathing a bit harder and you'll forget yourself. Not a bad thing for either of you.

Most of all, keep a healthy and positive perspective when things get tough. Make an effort to count your blessings and make a mental list of all the things that you have to be grateful for. It is hard to wallow in all the negatives and stressors of the moment (which stunt our ability to move forward and focus on solutions instead of problems) when we are feeling grateful for what we have.

If we have to try to be super parents, we might as well make it as easy on ourselves as possible. Take a deep breath, stop being so hard on yourself, take time to enjoy yourself, enjoy your partner, enjoy your children and enjoy life. It all passes by way too fast, and before you know it, you'll be missing these frenzied, chaotic summers with the sounds of your children's laughter booming throughout the house.

Tips For Single Parents

When I was first asked by Stacy Schwed to contribute to Parents R People I was truly honored. To be able to share ideas and tips with parents across the country has always been a passion of mine. Since we are going to be spending some time together, I thought that it would be important for you the reader, to get to know a little about me. I am the founder of www.singleddadstown.com a web site dedicated to inspiring and assisting single parents across the country, host of my own radio show "The Bill McLeod Show" "Helping Single Parents Succeed" and a soon to be published author. It is because of these endeavors that I have been asked to contribute to Parents R People. But who I really am, is a blessed father of two wonderful children. I am somewhat of a novelty in that I am a full time 24/7 single dad. I became so because of their mother's untimely death at the age of 44. It was because of her death that I have made it my mission and passion, to help parents deal with the trials and tribulations; of this experience we call parenting. Over the years I have been blessed to have interviewed some of the most successful and insightful parents from around the world. In doing so, I have learned a few tips that I will be sharing with you here at Parents R People. I believe that we can all learn something from each other if for no other reason than "you can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself So here are a few tips that I hope will bring value to your life and assist you with becoming the best parent that you can possibly be.

TIP #1:

There is a saying that "Children have never been very good at listening to their parents, but they have never failed to imitate them". This saying should remind each of us that we are the most important role model in our children's lives. We are their stars and they are the paparazzi, constantly taking mental pictures of how we are acting. Our children have been watching and learning from us since the day that they came out of the womb. If we as parents want to raise great kids we need to be available for our children in both our actions and with our time. Never forget that LOVE is spelled TIME.

TIP #2:

Building self esteem in your child is one of the greatest gifts that you could ever give them. It is the gift that will allow them to grow, mature and prosper with confidence and success. Children need to be wanted, appreciated and loved in order to develop a strong self esteem. I am a huge believer that children need three things in life. To be listened to, to feel safe and to be loved. The next time you get a chance, say something positive about your child to another adult, while the child is present. Just hearing you boast about them in front of another adult will increase their self esteem level tremendously.



by Bill McLeod