

When you become a parent, many people tell you to “make time for yourself”. They stress the importance of taking care of yourself before taking care of others. This is under the assumption that if you are healthy, body and mind, you will do a better job of caring for others, including your children.

When I was the Mom of just one child, taking a little “me-time” was easy. I’d go to yoga or schedule a class for myself. I’d go out for the day with or without my little one. I had friends and family who would offer to babysit and nap times were a breeze (I literally had enough time to do nothing at all).

After having two little ones, it got a little harder to “make time for myself.” I worked full-time and then full-time and part-time. Then I became the sole caregiver. I noticed that time for myself was a distant dream or it would only present itself in the form of working overtime while others babysat (parents of two or more children may agree with me here – it’s much harder to find babysitters when you have multiple kids!).

I sat down one day and Googled “taking time for myself” and a host of sites came up with how to manage time, how to prioritize, how to step back and make wish lists, how to reschedule your schedule, etc. I closed the search, feeling too overwhelmed by others who had enough time to make a website about saving time (one of them even had how-to photos!).

Shockingly, not even a day later, I ran into a Mom-friend of mine while out doing yet more errands. She invited me out for coffee but I let her know that I didn’t have time! I even casually mentioned that I couldn’t get together at all because I wouldn’t have time in the foreseeable future. She stopped me dead where I was and told me she had a secret about making time for yourself. “The secret is not to do it! Do not to put another task on your agenda, the task of finding your own time,” she told me. “Do not make more of an effort than you already do. The secret is to do less.”

It struck me just how odd it sounded. On the car ride home, I really thought about what she meant and came to the conclusion that I would try it! Perhaps there was something to this. Why tack on another chore? Why give myself another task to fret over not having enough time for? In the business that was my life – with kids, jobs, errands, and household chores galore, it’s no wonder I don’t have time. Why do something as silly as add another job to my already full plate! But doing less... Would I still be a good Mom if I did less? Would less effort affect my children or impact me as a successful person?

Well of course I Googled it. Turns out there are just as many websites on this backwards theory, most of which are about being a minimalist (my favourite is [here](#)).

I experimented with a few ideas and found that they’ve all worked so far:

Minimize Hovering

Some sites go into detail about not hovering over your children, giving them space (by giving yourself space) and letting them be the innovators. They stress that in this day, with all the modern-day entertainment, children lack the opportunity to be bored. With boredom comes creation. So back off from Pinterest and the indoor jungle gyms, they tell us. Give your kids space and see where it takes them.

I took this to heart because I do like to interact with my children while they play and tend to put my needs (like a clean kitchen) on the backburner. I normally would play with my boys all night and then do the dishes when they go to bed. For the last two weeks I have been doing the dishes while they play. It turns out that they are quite capable of entertaining themselves and even dream up wild stories with their

imaginations. The problem-solving and games they concoct are extraordinary! My eldest son is currently a dragon and his brother plays the part of the “dragon’s sister.”

Minimize Chores

Giving myself a break from chores (rather than adding on a “me-time” chore) can be just as or even more rewarding. My old midwife did tell me about how my baby won’t notice if I don’t wash my hair or put on make-up. She told me this just after I had my first baby. Like I mentioned above, with just one baby, I was capable of managing my time, even enough to take a shower. Now with two babies however, I have learned to proudly brush my greasy hair into a knot on top of my head with my banana covered fingers.

I also liked the idea of sleeping rather than going to a yoga class, plus it’s just as healthy. So, I did just that. I started sleeping during my “night off” and stopped wearing make-up on the weekends. Turns out my kids still love me (and recognize me).

Additionally, they learn by role modeling, so if they know I’m going to bed, they go to sleep easier too.

Minimize Purchases

Some sites discuss buying less stuff is a positive for our children. Apparently clutter increases hormones associated with stress (find out more [here](#)). I know with Christmas being so close this can be a challenge, but it could save us from stressing out about shopping, standing in lines, worrying about the right gifts, and wasting money on gifts that never get played with.

I recently moved and the house is quite bare. Less clutter coupled with the added space for innovation has opened up a lot of doors (particularly ones for hide-and-go seek). It also made me realize that I prefer a somewhat empty house and it gave me an idea – I decided to only buy stocking stuffers this year and spent the money for the “big gift” on a family outing related gift instead. I know my boys will like it because when they play with toys, they like to play with people. Laughing, talking, and sharing are the fun that come with toys so if we spend time together doing something exciting, the enjoyment will be the same!

Minimize Meals

Lastly, I wanted to share a minimalist approach that I’ve taken for years. Even though I’m not new to this one, I wanted to share it because I know it works. It’s about minimizing meals in a way that saves you money and time (and has health benefits!). Here’s how:

Eat raw meals. By not turning the stove on, you’re saving time, loads of it. I’m also not talking about ready-made meals that look as appealing as they taste. I’m talking about raw foods like nuts, seeds, fruit, veggies, and cheeses. I stock up on these relatively inexpensive foods and use them for meals (rather than just busting them out at snack time). A banana with a bowl of seeds is a much faster and healthier breakfast than eggs and toast. Plus, it’s cheaper! Canned fish with cheese and frozen peas (I don’t cook them, my kids still love them!) make for a wonderful lunch. Supper usually is *the meal* of the day for most parents as it’s when you have the most time to prep it. This is when I make a smoothie (see my favourite smoothie recipe below), as it does take time, and pair it with something warm, like breaded chicken nuggets or haddock, which take little prep work.

So there you have it. When mama (or papa) ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy, so try these minimalist approaches to saving you time, money, and your sanity!

Spinach and Pineapple Smoothie

I've perfected this one over the years – try it yourself! All you require is a blender, the ingredients, and a few taste-testers. Add the ingredients to the blender and blend!

- 2 generous handfuls of spinach (washed)
- 1 cup of frozen pineapple
- 1 cup of kefir or yogurt (strawberry or vanilla)
- 1 cup of orange juice (or pineapple)
- 1 tablespoon of chia seeds (for the health benefits – they bind with cholesterol and detoxify – click [here](#))
- 1 tablespoon of spirulina powder (for the health benefits – antioxidant and anti-inflammatory – click [here](#))

This recipe makes enough for three to four hungry family members!