



There is power in silence, meditation and prayer. Just a few minutes a day can make a real difference, even if it's just sitting by the ocean and contemplating the rocks.

PHOTO: ASHLEY BATZ

TAKING A BREATH

PARENTAL SELF-CARE IS ABOUT NURTURING YOUR BODY AND MIND SO YOU HAVE THE ENERGY NEEDED TO RAISE YOUR CHILDREN IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON

Well done parents and carers of school-aged children. You've survived the first week of back-to-school lunch boxes and routine. Now it's time to discuss something rather befitting – parental self-care.

Firstly, here's a recap of my current parenting series:

Parenting is a job where there's no official training and no experience. You're not allowed to quit because people's lives are at stake! I called out to you for your contributions on what you find most challenging. Please keep them coming so we can collectively approach all the relevant demands head-on.

Secondly, I discussed the trend of children who are so overstimulated, entertained and surrounded by toys that they're losing the ability to self-regulate, self-soothe and find contentment for themselves. I highlighted

the importance of not scribbling chaos in the precious blank margins of life that will encourage children to channel their inner resourcefulness to face life's challenges.

Last week I listed 30 thought-provoking questions to ask yourself and your children to help gauge your success.

I'm sure you'd agree it'd be ludicrous to commence strategising before we've ensured we are the best version of ourselves. That is well balanced with appropriate attention to our own spiritual, physical, psychological and social selves. It's time to focus on an upward spiral of continued growth and change by learning to take care of you.

Why not spend time considering what your values are and how much time you dedicate to nurturing your spirituality?

There is power in silence, meditation and prayer. Even just a few minutes a day can make a difference. When we meditate, our

mind naturally begins to relax and sinks into deeper levels of rest. I'll 'sink' deeper into explaining why.

In the white matter of the brain, there's a fatty substance called myelin. It is a sheath that protects nerve fibres, inhibits energy loss, and helps information move along neural pathways. When you repeat an activity, the myelin coating thickens and information travels faster along those neural highways.

In the same way, meditation, prayer and mindfulness that involves attending to the sensations can energise certain layers of the neocortex in your brain. This adds thickness to the prefrontal cortex and insula. Pay attention to your breathing, heart rate, muscles, feelings and desires and the left hemisphere of your pre-frontal cortex switches on and prevents your right hemisphere from obscuring with negativity.

This encourages you to approach life with greater clarity and fervour versus becoming easily overwhelmed and anxious by challenging tasks such as taming lions in a circus, or parenting. Same thing really.

Isn't that a great reason to dedicate time to engaging with your spiritual self? I look forward to expanding on the self-care of the physical, psychological and social aspects with you next week. In the meantime, give your brain some peace by sitting on rocks by the beautiful ocean and talking. They probably have better listening skills than your children anyway.

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