

THE IMPORTANCE OF 'ME' TIME

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It would be safe to say that most women who long for their first child have absolutely no idea just how much time that dear little one will take out of the day. It doesn't seem to take long before a new mother finds herself thinking back to all that glorious free time she had when she daydreamed of having a family!

It hits us like a sledgehammer. All those broken nights' sleep, the lack of time to snatch a bite to eat and one look at the washing piled up in the laundry room causes us to groan, "Ahhhhh!" What happened to those good old days? Give me a break, please! Then you begin to wonder why mothers consider having another child, and as for '19 and counting', that woman has got to be crazy, right? You can't wind back the clock, and really, you know in your heart of hearts you wouldn't exchange motherhood for anything. So, what can you do to retrieve your sanity?

Creating a schedule sounds like a good idea. Unfortunately, those under 2ft tall don't know what big words like 'schedule' mean, so flexibility still has to be considered. There are some babies who do sleep, wake and eat by the clock and if that is your experience, most mothers are jealous of you! For your own sake, I would still create a schedule. Even if you can't stick to them, routines give you structure to the day and they remind you, in your fatigued state, to feed, bathe, and change the baby!

All parents, particularly mothers, need 'me' time. It doesn't have to be hours, but you do need to be able to step away every now and then. My daughter has two little ones 17 months apart. She has just called and asked me to join her on a short 'escape' to our favorite mall. Her husband offered to feed the boys their lunch and put them to bed to give her a break. His turn was this morning went he went out early for a bike ride, quiet breakfast en route, and then home again. This is a great example of working out 'me' time.

Something else I found to be a lifesaver when my kids were small was to meet with other young mothers at regular intervals. It can be as simple as an impromptu coffee while your kids play together, or a regular weekly meeting where you can take the kids and let them play. You can always have grandmother come and sit with the kids for an hour or two! It gets you out of the house and allows you to talk things over with the other Moms. The burdens being shared are often halved. It's also a great way to discuss experiences and help solve child management issues.

Parents need to spend time together. This is where friends and relatives can come and take over for a few hours to allow the young Mom and Dad some much needed time to talk, love and laugh together. As the children get a little

older, parents can even go away for weekends. Grandparents can usually manage a couple of days with little children before getting too worn out. They may even relish the opportunity.

We all need space at various times in our lives. Time to recoup, gather our thoughts, plan for the next phase or just get some well-earned rest. Young parents need to schedule it in for some time during the day. Now, it may not happen exactly when you planned it because babies don't always work to our schedule. However, to be able to just walk out into the garden alone, go to a nearby park when your spouse or a friend comes over, sit and quietly read a magazine, take a long bath, take a drive or go to the mall with your Mom are all great ways to calm down, grab a tiny slice of your 'other than mother' life, and just breathe.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.