Parents: Support Your Mental Health with These Four Fundamental Practices



Being a parent is full of both joyful and [challenging](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/singletons/201605/5-top-parenting-challenges-and-how-deal-them) moments. When your days seem to be full of the latter, your mental health can begin to suffer. Conditions such as [anxiety](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/anxiety-disorder-symptoms) and [depression](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-in-women/index.shtml) can start to flare up, and it may feel like a struggle to simply get through the day.

If you feel like this, you certainly are not alone. When parenting a child with special needs, it is even more important to have a [self-care](https://www.verywellmind.com/importance-of-self-care-for-health-stress-management-3144704) routine that supports your physical and mental health. It is only when you are feeling your best that you can provide the love, care, and support your child needs to thrive.

The [Utah Down Syndrome Foundation](https://www.udsf.org/) shares four basic self-care practices that parents can use on a regular basis to support their overall mental health.

# Getting Plenty of Sleep

No matter the age(s) of your child(ren), getting a full seven to nine hours of [sleep](https://www.everydayhealth.com/sleep/101/how-much-sleep-do-you-need.aspx) every night can be an incredibly difficult task. Between taking care of household duties after your child goes to bed and being woken up in the middle of the night, proper rest can be elusive. However, even if you can only get an extra hour or two of sleep every so often, the benefits are massive.

Studies have shown that [sleep deprivation](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/sleep-and-mental-health) can lead to mental health problems and that getting the recommended amount of rest can boost your mood and decrease your stress levels. To increase the number of hours you sleep each week, start identifying timewasters in your day. Whether it’s watching too much TV or spending too much time on social media, swap time-wasting activities, especially those you do at night, with an earlier bedtime.

# Reducing Stress

Excess stress can wreak havoc on your mental health. If life is starting to feel overwhelming, now is a great time to explore ways to reduce stress while at home. Begin by making changes to the things that you can directly control. This can include purchasing a pressure cooker to spend less time cooking meals, learning [yoga](https://weknowyoga.com/15-easy-ways-to-reduce-stress-and-achieve-more-serenity-at-home/) and meditation, or practicing [self-massage](https://www.muscle-joint-pain.com/trigger-points/self-massage/).

# Making Your Home a Relaxing Space

Your home environment can significantly influence your mood and overall mental health. When family members are arguing with each other and complaining — and when there is excess clutter — [negative energy](https://www.redfin.com/blog/clearing-bad-energy-from-your-home/) can quickly build up. As part of your self-care routine, resolve to turn your home into a fresh and vibrant space to help relieve tension. Make your home a calm and relaxed space for everyone by injecting positivity. Use an [essential oil](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/a30201911/essential-oils-for-anxiety/) diffuser, take an afternoon to declutter and clean, and open your windows to let in fresh air.

# Taking a Vacation

The self-care benefits of taking a vacation — or even a staycation in Salt Lake City — cannot be emphasized enough. Stepping away from your daily routine can reduce both stress and anxiety. To get the maximum benefits out of a vacation/staycation, consider staying in a vacation rental with [a full kitchen](https://turnkeyvr.com/vacation-rentals/utah/salt-lake-city) so that you can also cook healthy meals. No matter what neighborhood you choose, you're bound to find a vacation rental that helps support your physical and mental health while you’re “away.”

This year make it a priority to build a self-care routine that helps you feel amazing. From reducing your personal stress levels and the stress levels in your home to getting enough sleep, some of the most basic self-care practices can do wonders for your mental health. Even if you feel like you don’t have the time, taking care of your overall mental health can make you the best parent you can be.

Utah Down Syndrome Foundation provides support to individuals and families who are navigating the challenges associated with down syndrome. See the ways you can [get involved](https://www.udsf.org/how-to-help/) today.