

Ask the Pediatrician: Is it OK to need a break from my children?

March 27 2023, by Dr. Amanda



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Parenting is hard. You give all you've got to love your children and make sure they're safe and thriving. You may not be sleeping well. You haven't had time to yourself. You miss being with other adults.

Every parent has asked themselves this question at some point: Is it OK to take a break from my children?

The daily pressures of juggling work, children and everything else can feel like too much. You might feel even more tired and stressed out.

That is why taking [time](#) for yourself is not only good for you, but also good for your children. It's a lot easier to support them when you're refreshed after a little mental and physical break. There is no shame, failure or lack of love in needing time for yourself. We care for others best when we have taken care of ourselves as much as possible.

Here are some ways you can do this:

- Spend time with a friend in person or on the phone
- Take a walk
- Try meditation or breathing exercises
- Run out for a favorite treat
- Schedule an activity with someone you love

If time is short, even a simple 15 minutes to take a shower or read a book when your children are in a safe place or with another caregiver is helpful.

There are precautions to keep in mind.

Leaving children alone, even if they're asleep and you have a [baby monitor](#), isn't safe. Some states have a law about the age a child can safely be home alone. Even if your state doesn't, most children younger than 12 are not safe to be by themselves without an adult.

Find a babysitter or ask a trusted friend or family member to care for your children. Whether it's for 15 minutes or a few hours, someone

responsible should always be present with your children. If you're on vacation, check with your hotel about a list of local babysitting services.

If you have family, friends or neighbors who also have children, you could work out caring for each other's children from time to time. Ask your [day care](#), preschool or school for resources. There might be someone in your faith community who would volunteer to help.

It's important to know and trust the people who care for your children. If something doesn't feel right, trust yourself as a parent and don't leave your child with that person. Make a list of one to three trusted people you can call on to help. That way when you really need help or are stressed, you already know who to call. Remember, you're not alone, and you can lean on others to help!

Besides getting out and having time to yourself, doing things you enjoy together with your children is good for them and you. Consider taking a walk with your baby in their stroller, reading, coloring, building blocks, playing a [board game](#) or outside game, preparing a meal and eating together or doing a craft together.

Joining a parent's group through your faith community, neighborhood organization, gym or [community center](#) is another way to make time for fun. Many are free to join and provide a connection to other parents.

Remember that all parents need time for themselves. When you take care of your own mental and [physical health](#), your [children](#) benefit too. If you ever feel like being a parent is too much, it's OK to ask for help. You can also talk with your pediatrician, who can connect you with more resources.

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