

Mom vs. Me

When your child becomes the center of your universe, it means that some things get shoved to the side.

Including you.

And when this happens, many moms describe a feeling of losing themselves to parenthood. When you've almost forgotten what it's like to have your own interests and hobbies.

"I'm a mom," says Randi Rockwell of Rock Island. "But I'm not just a mom."

If you feel like you've lost the "me" as a mom, here are a few tips from other local parents to find yourself again.

Focus on you.

Your kids are very important, but so are you.

The number one tip to be a better parent from our local experts is to take care of yourself. That means staying healthy, having time to yourself, and focusing on relationships.

"As moms, we have to recognize when we need to separate ourselves from our kids," says Jessica Gregory of Davenport.

When her family moved to the Quad Cities with the military, Jessica left behind her career of 11 years and didn't know a soul in the area.

So she joined a book club. And two years later, she leads the group herself. And even in the midst of several deployments, the mom of two is building a career as a personal trainer, fitness instructor and teacher.

"It's really important to have things that are just for me," she says. "I can't imagine the type of mom I'd be without that."

Randi agrees. "I need to get out of the house and have 'me' time," she says of her career at St. Ambrose University. "It helps me to be a better mom and be a better role model to my daughter."

Sara White of Eldridge also believes that time to herself is important. The stay-at-home mother of two makes alone time a priority.

"I have an awesome husband, who encourages me to have child-free time," she says. She says just a bit of quiet time can leave her feeling recharged.

Focus on your passion.

Don't forget that your hobbies and interests also make you a more well-rounded parent.

For Randi and Jessica, that means they make time to work out and stay fit.



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"It's really important for my kids to see me being healthy and helping other people (as a trainer and teacher)," says Jessica.

Randi agrees. "I'm really into fitness. And this teaches Rory that it's important to lead a healthy life." Whether it's exercise, painting, or writing, make sure that you don't forget to make time for your own interests and hobbies. It not only helps you feel great, it also shows your kids that it's always important to nurture your interests.

Focus on your friendships.

As a caregiver, you need friendships more now than ever. We've already described why there's power in having your own parenting tribe.

Research has even shown that parents with close friends and family members are more effective with their own children.

"I still make time to get together with my friends," says Kacey Fleshman of Colona. "Plus my closest friends are the women I work with every day, and they all have kids, too."

These friendships give her the opportunity to get advice and even laugh at tough situations.

"It brings normalcy to parenting," Kacey explains.

Focus on your relationship.

Once you have children, it's more important than ever to stay connected to your significant other. This means making time to talk and spend one-on-one time together.

"It's really important to work on our marriage and relationship," Sara says. "My marriage is a big part of me, and taking time to nurture that is important."

Sara recommends finding another couple to swap childcare for date nights. And set these times in stone because dates are typically the first things to get cancelled when things come up.

Focus on accepting help.

Many caregivers don't like to ask for help or even accept it when it's offered. But put aside your pride and say yes to support from others.

Jessica knows she can get a workout in at the local YMCA, where free childcare is available. And while her husband was deployed, she was thankful for the childcare provided by the Rock Island Arsenal.

Help can also come from spouses, family or friends.

"I'm always thankful to have my mom and dad," Kacey says. "For a long time I was too proud to ask for help, but even a 20 minute break with them can give us a fresh start."

Loving your kids still means you need to care for yourself. This is secondary for many parents, who see their children as the center of their universe.

But just a bit of time and effort on you can help you feel more like yourself and make you a better parent in the process.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 10.8.14 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.