



5 reasons not to feel guilty about 'me' time....

Why is it we tend to feel guilty about time spent away from our children?

One reason is, I believe, that we are conditioned to believe that to be a 'good' mum, we must spend every waking minute with our children, engaged in stimulating activities, or planning the next nutritious meal. For many of us, this belief was formed by our memory of our own mother, for whom motherhood often came earlier, who we remember as 'always being there'.

However, modern mothers have often experienced 10 years or so of financial independence, responsibility in the work place, travel, meals out and retail therapy on tap before having children. The leap into motherhood is a much, much harder transition to make. Many of us carry on working either through choice or necessity.

I was thinking the other day – how can I help my son to be strong and resilient in order to deal with whatever life may throw at him? I thought for some time until it occurred to me. People learn by example. So, I must show him how. And in fact – that goes for all the qualities I would wish my children to have. I realised that *my* behaviour is a fairly influential thing in my childrens' lives, at least until they start school and are spending more time away from home. I am currently their most important role model. Wow – what a responsibility!

Therefore, I need to concentrate on ME. I need to make sure that I am living by and exhibiting the qualities I want my children to have – authentically. And how do I make sure I do this?

By being happy in myself, in my relationships with others, and living the life I want. I believe that this must come first – and the rest will follow. And to make sure that you are living the life you want, you need time to think, reflect, plan and dream. Time to yourself.



So – by now I hope you realise how essential it is to have 'me time', and (within reason – I'm not advocating that you swan off to spa hotels every weekend..) it is certainly nothing you should feel guilty about. But in case you need more convincing, here are 5 more reasons not to feel guilty for having time to yourself....

1. Guilt is a pointless, horrible emotion which achieves nothing except making you feel terrible

Whatever you feel guilty about – ask yourself, what can I do about this? If you need to apologise to someone – go do it. If you've eaten too many doughnuts, vow to eat more healthily tomorrow, or go for a run.

But don't wallow in guilt. Decide how you are going to spend your time, and give 100% to whatever you decide to do, without thinking or worrying about the other stuff.

2. Time off is good for your health

Think of a field. Every 3 or 4 years of growing various crops, it has a year off to replenish itself with all the essential nutrients and minerals that are depleted by growing the crops.

Makes sense doesn't it?

3. The importance of dream time

My favourite example of what time to yourself with nothing but your own thoughts can do is JK Rowling. If what we are told is true, she came up with the idea of the Harry Potter septology (?) sitting in a café with a pen and a piece of paper.

I also find this incredibly helpful. It is a great time to organise your thoughts, plan some goals and come up with exciting ideas. Try it, I guarantee you will come away inspired.

4. You can get back some of the 'old' you

Remember what you were doing 2, 5, 10 years ago – 'pre-kids'? Were you working harder, playing harder, travelling more, going out with your partner more?

Whilst accepting that none of us can ever, or indeed in my case would never want to, go back to living the life we used to, there are some things we can do to get a bit of the old 'me' back if there are things you yearn for, or feel you have lost some of your identity through being a mum. It's just a question of working out what you really miss, and finding ways to bring it back into your life.

Do a baby-sit swap with a friend for the occasional evening out with your partner. Call up old friends and arrange a night out where any conversations about kids are banned. Take up an evening class.

You need to nurture yourself as well as your kids.

5. Nice mummy, evil mummy....

You will be so much *nicer*!!

And finally,

"Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, American poet

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