

Make Time for Yourself - Summer 2005

The Jewish News

Being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs in the world so you must be sure to have some “me” moments too.

Being a parent is a really important, demanding and difficult job. As parents we often spend all our time looking after everyone else in the family and do not look after ourselves as well as we should. This is especially true of those parents who have young children, or a great number, and are constantly on the go. We all strive to be good parents who listen to our children’s requirements, meet them if we can and provide them with love and affection, but we need to be happy with who we are. Our relationship with our children can be affected by our needs, if they are met or not.

This can mean satisfying our own needs before we meet those of our children. If we are not happy and fulfilled, how can we expect them to be? There are exceptions to this, so I will write generally.

Think about what your needs are, what makes you happy? What made you happy before you had children? What activities or interests? Who were you before you became a parent? Have a really good think, because for many of us we become a different person when we have children and lose sight of “us”. How can you reclaim that? Go out for a night with your friends? Get a job? Go on a course? Do some voluntary work? Lose weight? Get fit? Write down 10 things you want to do before you’re 50, prioritise them and start working towards one of them. You will rediscover who you are, all the skills you have and what you want to achieve. It’s a really enlightening exercise and you’ll learn a lot about the kind of person you are.

Doing any of the above suggestions will make you realise there is more to you than you think. You may be a parent, but you are also an individual with unique qualities: you are a partner, a domestic engineer, a work colleague and someone others like to be around.

Doing something for yourself will also give you time to yourself – a must for everyone. The ability to make the best use of our time is an important factor in determining our happiness. Not enough time to yourself can leave you frustrated, agitated and resentful of others. Our children demand so much of our time and energy that when we don’t have time out it shows in our attitude towards them.

By making time for ourselves we are much happier when we return to our children again – even if we have just had 10 minutes away from them to chat to a friend on the phone.

Being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs in the world so we need to be kind to ourselves, have time to be “us” and remember that we are parents with many interests, experiences and achievements.