



Lepage Associates
Solution-Based Psychological Services

ASK THE EXPERT
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QUESTION: I have school age children. How can I make time again for me and find my own identity when I have to often play both roles of mother and father as a single parent? Can you give me some suggestions before I pull ALL of my hair out?

Juggling being “mom” and “dad,” plus work, can be a challenge! But as your question implies, there is still an importance to finding time for yourself, both for relaxation and so you do have a sense of your own identity separate from your Self as a Parent. Three helpful hints: (1) Let go of any guilt you have about time for yourself! I don’t say this just for the sake of letting guilt go, but because time to yourself is ultimately also in the best interests of your child. A little adult time or personal time or relaxation time goes a long way to improving mood and thus allowing you to be an even better parent. Plus if you always ignore your own needs, you are role modeling for your children that self-care is not important, and that being an adult and parent is all work and no play. (2) Plan ahead, and one general plan that can be used regularly is best, otherwise planning itself can get put off. That is, build your personal time into your weekly schedule, don’t wait for there to be “time” for it. People do best with routines and schedules. Be creative and find what works for you and your family. Maybe Saturday mornings are your time to read and relax, or Sundays you go to evening church services, or every other Saturday you go hiking, or every Friday after work you go to happy hour, or Saturday night you participate in a game night or night out with friends... Whatever you do for yourself, build it into your schedule. A regular “me time” schedule, whether weekly, every other week, or once a month, allows you to plan your time more easily. (3) That brings up the question of child care for some people. Be creative! If you can afford a regular sitter (every other Saturday night for example), then advertise and find one. It is actually easier to find a sitter to work a regular schedule than to scurry to find a sitter for occasions as they come up. If you cannot afford a sitter, perhaps you can barter with a friend. For example, if you like to cook, maybe you can make a favorite meal in exchange for a night of child care. Or the most direct exchange is to swap child care services between yourselves. Also, accept all of the help that you can get! If a friend or family member offers free child care, graciously accept. By taking time for yourself, you will feel better and be role modeling a more balanced lifestyle for your child.