



## Encouragement for Weary Parents

Have you ever sat down at the end of a long day feeling exhausted and drained, maybe like you are failing as a parent? As you reflect on your day, do you sometimes replay in your mind the mistakes you may have made with your children that day? Please tell me I am not the only one!

Raising little people is tough business, and the older they become, the more complicated and demanding it can be. As a seasoned mom and experienced social worker, I have had my personal share of difficulties and walked alongside other parents, through extremely painful challenges.

I have learned though there are no perfect parents, every parent does the best they can with what they have. I still have a long way to go in my journey as a mom, but here is what I have observed so far.

1. **"I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."** These words shared by Maya Angelou are healing for when you feel overwhelmed with guilt at the times you feel as though you have messed up. You cannot repeat yesterday (or this morning), but you can learn from it and do better tomorrow.
2. **Practice self care.** This is not just bubble baths and candles. Looking after yourself involves many aspects. I often rely on teachings from a wise Cree friend when she explained to me the Medicine Wheel. To be in balance, you need to be sure you are caring for your *whole* being:
  - Physical:** Having a balanced diet, exercise, ensuring a safe home environment, following through with medical appointments such as dentist, doctor, or optometrist.
  - Emotional:** Talking about what hurts you or angers you. Seeking out professional help if necessary. Learning how to share your feelings in a respectful manner.
  - Spiritual:** This is not necessarily religion. It is about knowing you are part of something bigger than yourself. It is being connected to nature, your culture and your history. It is knowing there is a purpose for your life.
  - Mental:** Stimulating and challenging your mind, learning something new, reading, games, or keeping an open mind to different ideas and views.
3. **You do not have the right to ruin someone else's day.** My dad was the only male in our very tiny home and his message to my sister and I was this: regardless of how moody/cranky/impatient etc we were feeling, it was never OK to take it out on someone else and ruin their day. For the times I snap at my kids or unintentionally hurt their feelings, I refer back to #1 for forgiveness for myself and #2 to see where I am out of balance.
4. **Read to your children every day, even when they are older.** My parents were only in their teens when they started their family and my mom was a sponge when it came to

learning how to be a great mother. A smart person told her to read to her babies all the time. She instilled a love of reading and learning in my sister and I at very young ages. Sit with your children daily, when you can, and read to them out loud. Read interesting and age appropriate articles and stories to them as they get older. Listen to books while you drive. This will encourage their imagination and curiosity.

5. **"Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff."** Poet and author Catherine M. Wallace shared this advice 20 years ago and it continues to be relevant. There will always be distractions, but when your little ones are trying to tell you something, it is crucial to your relationship with them to put down your phone or mute the TV or whatever for a few moments and give them your attention. It builds a safe foundational relationship so they will come to you with their big concerns when they are older.
6. **Be honest...but discerning when talking with your child about yourself.** If you have had a bad day it's ok to say it, then balance it with sharing what healthy self care activities you will do to make yourself feel better such as going for a walk, cuddling the dog or phoning a friend. Kids are great imitators, give them something great to imitate.
7. **Learn how to speak your child's love language.** Dr. Gary Chapman and Dr. Ross Campbell explain in their book ["The 5 Love Languages of Children"](#) the incredible gift of discovering how to communicate your love to your child so they genuinely feel loved by you. Children are all unique, learn about what makes your child feel adored.
8. **Comparison is the root of unhappiness** and this is especially true if you compare your child with others. Just as you, your children and your family are imperfect, so are others. What you see on social media or the image others portray in public is not always accurate. Embrace the uniqueness of your child and your family.

My home is becoming more quiet these days, with one child playing hockey 12 hours away and another attending university 7 hours away. I am realizing that time truly passes in a blink and I miss the chaos of the younger years. Parents, don't forget to look for the good in yourself and your child each and every day. Parenting is complicated, wild, fun and hard. Enjoy the journey, laugh and love as much as you can.



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