

Self-care:

Parenting a teenager isn't without its challenges, so it is important to look after yourself while supporting your young person. When your young person is struggling it's natural to put their needs first, but your well-being matters too. In fact, looking after your own mental health helps you stay calm, patient, and emotionally available for them.

Signs that you might be running low;

- Constant tiredness, even after sleep
- Feeling overwhelmed or helpless
- Irritability or snapping over small things
- Trouble focusing or making decisions
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or enjoyable things

These signs don't mean that you're failing - they mean you need care too. It's not selfish, it's essential. Taking care of your well-being isn't about stepping away from your young person's needs, it's about being resourced enough to support them consistently. You can't pour from an empty cup. Try carving out even ten minutes a day for something that helps you reset. Building small habits of self-care can have a big impact over time. Remember, seeking help is a form of strength, not weakness.

When to seek help:

If you feel that you may benefit from support yourself, you may want to try one of the following;

1. **Talk to someone you trust**
Speaking openly to a friend, GP, or counsellor can lift the weight off your shoulders.
2. **Make space for moments of rest**
Even short breaks can help reset your nervous system (this could be a walk, music, journaling, or quiet time).
3. **Let go of perfection**
'Good enough' parenting is healthy. Children don't need perfection - they need love and consistency.
4. **Stay connected to yourself**
What brings you joy or calm? Try to reclaim a little of what made you feel like 'you' before life got busy.
5. **Set gentle boundaries**
It's okay to say no. It's okay to ask for help. You are allowed to have needs too.

If you're feeling overwhelmed please don't suffer in silence. There are services and people who can help:

- Counsellors or talking therapy
- Peer support groups or parenting networks
- Crisis helplines if things feel unmanageable
- Mindworks Surrey (<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/i-am-parentfamily-membercarer>)
- Mind Matters Surrey website

Mental Health Support

Leaflet 14



Information for parents and carers about how to support you with your mental health

Common feelings:

Common feelings that parents and carers may experience include;

- **Guilt** (even when you're doing your best)
- **Shame** (if you feel you're not coping like others)
- **Anxiety** (worrying constantly about 'what ifs')
- **Low mood** (feeling flat, numb, or hopeless)
- **Resentment** (wanting space, but feeling you can't take it)

These are more common than you think, and they don't mean you're a bad parent.

Strategies to try:

Helpful strategies to try if you are feeling overwhelmed include;

- **Breathing exercises:** Even 60 seconds can ground you
- **Write things down:** Offloading onto paper can quiet a racing mind
- **Use 'micro-moments':** Savour a shower, music in the car, a deep breath before entering a room
- **Accept 'good enough':** When parenting, not every day needs to be perfect
- **Limit information overload:** Especially if it adds guilt or pressure

Common signs:

Signs that you might be struggling include;

- Difficulty sleeping, even when tired
- Feeling irritable, weepy, or 'on edge'
- Losing interest in things you enjoy
- Withdrawing from friends or activities
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Thinking 'I can't do this' more often than not

Looking after you:

Practical ways to look after yourself;

1. **Give yourself permission to pause:** It's okay to rest. You don't need to 'earn' time for yourself.
2. **Keep connected:** Talking to a friend, partner, or another parent can lift the weight and remind you you're not alone.
3. **Protect small moments for yourself:** Even 10-15 minutes a day to read, walk, stretch, or have a cup of tea without interruption can help you reset.
4. **Be kind to your inner voice:** Notice if you're being hard on yourself. Try saying to yourself what you'd say to a friend in your shoes.
5. **Ask for help when you need it:** You don't need to carry everything alone.
6. **Don't neglect your interests**

It's important:

Parenting is rewarding, but it can also be exhausting, emotional, and lonely at times. Your mental health is just as important as your child's. Taking care of yourself isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. As a parent, there are many possible pressures, including;

- Lack of sleep or rest
- Financial or work stress
- Relationship or co-parenting tensions
- Juggling multiple responsibilities
- Feeling isolated or unsupported
- Pressure to be a 'perfect parent'
- Past trauma or mental health struggles resurfacing

What you deserve:

You deserve support, compassion, and recognition for everything you do.

What to say to yourself:

- 'I'm doing my best with what I have today.'
- 'It's okay to feel tired; this is hard.'
- 'My well-being matters too.'

What you deserve to hear:

- 'You're not alone'
- 'You're allowed to need rest and support'
- 'You're doing better than you think'
- 'Taking care of yourself is part of being a good parent or carer'