

Moms Matter



Topic 1: Take Care of Yourself

Moms spend a lot of time and energy looking after others. This can make you feel good about yourself. But it's also difficult and exhausting work. So try to look after yourself, too. You deserve it!

- **Talk to yourself.** Tell yourself you need the same good care you give others. There's often no time to spare for long breaks. But try to find 5 minutes for quick care ideas. And take even longer if you can!
- **Talk to others.** Talk things over with a friend, a family member, or someone you trust. Call someone when you need a lift. Cry with someone. Laugh with someone.

Use the phone. Talk to your next door neighbour. Other people can really help just by listening. And you help others when you listen to them, too.

- **Say no when you really don't want to do something.** Moms often do things they think they have to do, not things they want to do. Many people expect the impossible from you. So figure out which things you can say no to. Start with small things. This will give you the courage to say no to the bigger things.
- **Say yes to yourself.** Allow yourself to take a break. Be good to yourself. It starts with simple things.
- **Quick care ideas.** Many moms say it's hard to find time or money to take care of themselves. But you don't always need a lot of time or money. Try these ideas from other moms:
 - sit on your porch or balcony
 - get up before your children and read or prepare for your day
 - listen to some relaxing music
 - plant a herb garden or window box
 - take a walk
 - take a nap with your children
 - light a candle or burn some incense
 - go to the library and read the latest magazines or go online
 - have a bubble bath

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- **Find ways to help you deal with stress.** Being a mom is often very stressful. You might not have enough money. You might be lonely, isolated and have no support. You might be raising your children alone. You have so much work to do. The work moms do is very important. But other people often take it for granted. You might be a mom, a caregiver, a partner, and a friend. You might also work outside the home or go to school. Here are some ideas from other moms about ways to deal with stress. Pick and choose from these ideas. Or think of your own. Do whatever is helpful for you.
 - take a nap
 - ask a friend, family member, or neighbour to watch your children for a few minutes
 - take turns with other moms and look after each other's children
 - take some deep breaths
 - take a time out
 - listen to some relaxing music
 - go for a walk
 - talk to someone you trust

Many moms say it's hard to ask for support. You might feel you have to be strong and handle everything yourself. Or you might be afraid to ask for support because of a custody case. Or you might feel alone and that no one can help. Sometimes all you need is advice and information. But other times you might need more.

- **You have the right to ask for support.** You are as important as everyone else. You deserve support!
- **You have the right to choose what's best for you.** You know yourself best. You know what will help you most. You need someone who listens and understands. You don't need arguments. You don't need someone who tells you what to do.

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Topic 2: How to Talk to Your Kids About...

Separation and Divorce

It can be hard to talk to your children about **divorce and separation**. It's a difficult time for all of you.

- **Learn how to deal with the situation yourself.** The way you deal with divorce or separation will determine how your children deal with it, too. Try to keep your children out of problems you have with your partner.
- **Reassure your children.** Tell them how much you love them. Let them know the divorce or separation is not their fault.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Children often learn about **alcohol and other drugs** by watching their parents. Children whose parents abuse alcohol or other drugs often have alcohol or drug problems themselves.

- **Try to be a good role model.** Use alcohol safely. Read more about safe drinking limits.
- **Talk to your children about alcohol and other drugs.** And talk to them about healthy ways to deal with stress. Together, you will think of lots of good ideas.

Money

It can be very difficult to talk to your children about **money**. Many moms say they feel guilty because they can't give their children everything they ask for. Here are some ideas that have helped other moms:

- involve your children in making decisions and choices about purchases
- use examples of things that are important to your child when you're trying to explain the value of money
- if you can afford to give your children an allowance, help them set up a budget and save for the things they want to buy
- if your child is old enough, suggest they do odd jobs for neighbours

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Topic 3: Money Matters, Low Cost Activities for Kids, and Getting Organized

Money Matters

Many moms don't have enough money. This means you have to find creative ways to save money. And often you have to do without.

Food is a huge part of the monthly budget. So it makes sense to shop wisely. Try these ideas:



- use coupons and buy items on sale
- use a shopping list
- when you have a little extra money, buy grocery gift certificates so you'll always have food even if you don't have money

- go shopping with a friend — buy in bulk and then divide things when you get home
- don't shop when you're hungry
- try to avoid pre-packaged foods — they're expensive and less nutritious than making your own
- buy no name (generic) items — they're cheaper than brand names
- find bargain items on the top and bottom shelves

Here are more money-saving ideas from other moms:

- plan ahead for special events, such as birthdays
- have a budget and try to follow it
- decide which bills have to be paid in order for you to live and pay those bills first
- shop at second hand stores
- buy craft supplies instead of toys
- when you rent a movie, find a neighbour or friend to swap with — that way you get two movies for the price of one
- buy clothes out of season — you can get up to 75% off the regular price
- take advantage of your local Dollar Store or a second-hand store — often you can find real gems at affordable prices

Pick and choose from these ideas. Or think of your own. Do whatever is helpful for you.

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Low Cost Activities

Here are some ideas from other moms on low cost activities for children:

- try activities you enjoyed as a child such as water balloon toss or blowing bubbles
- in the winter fill plastic bottles with food colouring and water and paint on the snow
- have a picnic
- feed the birds
- go to the market and let your children pick out a piece of fruit for a treat
- have a backwards day and eat dessert before supper
- let your children plan a meal, shop for what you need, and then cook it together
- let your children rearrange their rooms
- take a nature walk and collect 'treasures'
- have a movie night at home
- change your routine and try something new

Pick and choose from these ideas. Or think of your own. Do whatever is helpful for you.

How to Get Organized

- Purchase a small calendar or date book to mark upcoming appointments. Keep it in a convenient place where you will look at it everyday.
- Keep important papers in one place. Place bank statements, insurance papers, rent receipts, and other important papers in inexpensive folders and put them all in the same place where you can easily find them.
- Be patient with yourself as you get organized.
- Give yourself credit for everything you accomplish. It doesn't matter if some chores don't get done right away.

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Topic 4: How to Protect Your Kids from Second Hand Smoke, and How to Quit Smoking When You're Ready

How to Protect Your Kids from Second Hand Smoke

These are some ideas other moms have found helpful to protect kids from second hand smoke:

- Designate a smoking place where your kids aren't allowed. Make it comfortable and keep all your ashtrays, lighters, and cigarettes there. This is your place to have a break.
- It's best to smoke outside, but sometimes you can't leave little ones alone. So sit by an open window and blow all the smoke directly outside. Use a fan to help blow smoke out the window.
- If you have a craving but can't get outside to smoke, delay it as long as you can and try to keep busy.
- If the craving still persists, take a drag or two, then put it out until you can get outside. This could also cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke.
- Ask your visitors to smoke outside and/or to watch your kids while you go outside to smoke.
- Give yourself rewards for reaching your goals. It's hard work — you deserve it!
- Try to cut out 1 cigarette a day, then slowly increase the number you eliminate. Also smoke outside as often as you can. Start with 1 a day and build from there.

Remember: every little thing counts to protect your kids from second hand smoke. Start with small changes and build on them.

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How to Quit Smoking When You're Ready

If you're ready to quit smoking, here are some ways to get started:

- **Make a list.** Write down what you like and what you don't like about smoking. Then write down reasons why you want to quit and reasons why you don't want to quit. This helps you see benefits and drawbacks. And it helps you think of ways to change.
- **Change your smoking triggers.** Smoking can be triggered by how you feel or by situations. Think of things in your life that might be triggers for your smoking. Then think of ways to change or respond to your triggers.
- **Change some of your smoking habits.** Try anything that will make it harder for you to smoke. For example, keep your cigarettes and matches in different places.
- **Wait.** Try to cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke each day by making the time between each cigarette longer.
- **Remember:** many women make many attempts to quit before they quit for good — on average, 7 serious attempts! So if you start smoking again, it doesn't mean you will never be able to quit.

Topic 5: Safe Drinking Guidelines



There are guidelines to help you decide how much drinking is too much. These guidelines are recommended by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Canadian Medical Association.

1. Know how much alcohol is in a drink.

Different drinks have the same amount of alcohol. One drink equals:

- one 5% beer =
- 1½ ounces of liquor, liqueur, or brandy =
- 3 ounces of sherry =
- 5 ounces of wine

2. Don't drink more than two drinks a day. On days you do drink, don't drink more than:

- two beers or
- three ounces of liquor, liqueurs, or brandy or
- 2 three ounce glasses of sherry or
- 2 five ounce glasses of table wine

3. Don't drink more than nine drinks a week. There should be at least three days a week when you don't drink at all. It gives your body a chance to recover.

Alcohol affects how you think and feel. Small amounts of alcohol might make you feel happy, relaxed, and self-confident. But drinking too much can make you feel sad, upset, or angry.

Small amounts of alcohol might dull painful feelings. But drinking too much won't change the problems behind those feelings. It can even make problems worse.

How other people drink can affect you, too. You are more likely to drink or take drugs if your parents, partner, or friends do. The same is true for your children. They are more likely to drink or take drugs if you do.

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4. There are times when you shouldn't drink at all. These times include when you:

- are pregnant
- take other medications
- are older
- have a chronic disease
- are going to drive a car