

## Say to yourself whatever you'd say to others

Imagine someone you cared about said they were feeling exactly how you are – what would you say to them? Now take that advice for yourself. It could be that you need to ask for help, that you need to not worry about having a tidy house or a mowed lawn, or maybe even that you need to call your GP to talk about your mental health. Whatever it is, give yourself the care and compassion you would offer your closest friend.

Parenting vulnerable children is a marathon, not a sprint. Marshal your resources, seek out whatever help is available and look after yourself, so that you can conserve your strength for the journey. In the long run, you'll be helping your children as well as yourself.



## Helping you to be an even better parent or carer



For more information and tips on family life, visit [cff.org.uk](http://cff.org.uk)

You might like to:

- Visit [homeforgood.org.uk](http://homeforgood.org.uk) for more information about adoption and fostering.
- Contact them on 0300 001 0995 if you'd like someone to talk to, and to signpost you to further support where possible.
- Read *No Matter What* by Sally Donovan for a biographical account of caring for vulnerable children.

Care for the Family seeks to promote strong family relationships and help those who face family difficulties.

 [cff.org.uk](http://cff.org.uk)

 029 2081 0800

 [mail@cff.org.uk](mailto:mail@cff.org.uk)

Care for the Family – A Christian response to a world of need. A registered charity (England and Wales: 1066905; Scotland: SC038497).

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 home for good

This leaflet was written for Care for the Family by **Home for Good** – a charity that inspires and equips the Church to play its part in caring for vulnerable children.

# Top Tips

## For Foster and Adoptive Families

## Looking after Yourself



As an adoptive parent, foster carer or kinship carer, you matter. You matter so much. While they may not always be able to show it, or even show it at all, you are probably the most important person in your child's life. You are giving them the care, compassion, consistency and commitment that each vulnerable child so desperately needs. And you can only do this if you are also able to look after yourself.

It is not surprising that so many parents and carers struggle to do this in the midst of their busy lives as they constantly prioritise their child's needs. It is not an easy thing to take time for yourself when there are so many other demands on your time. But wherever possible, seek to be aware of your own wellbeing, and do whatever you can to look after yourself.

## Pace yourself

Don't set impossible targets. Be realistic in what you might be able to achieve each day and recognise that some things might take longer for your family. Extend grace to yourself and to your children and remember the things that really matter.

## Find your tribe

It may be friends or family who have known you for years, it may be other parents and carers you've met locally or online – whoever they are, find the people who are for you, who will cheer you on and love your children with you. Be open and honest with them. Pick up the phone when you need to vent a frustration, share a heartbreak or celebrate a milestone. Set up a WhatsApp group of people you know you can trust and let it be a safe space for your concerns or anxieties.

## Do something you love

Even if you can only manage 15 minutes, do something just because you enjoy it – read a book, drink a nice coffee, make something. It might feel impossible but give yourself permission to immerse yourself in something enjoyable that's just for you.

## Rest well

This can often be easier said than done, especially when your children are not good sleepers, but do what you can to get enough sleep and have periods of rest in the day. Sometimes a nap is the best gift you could offer yourself.

## Build healthy habits

It is probably not the time to begin a strict new diet and exercise regime, but where possible, do what you can to establish patterns that are good for you. Get lots of fresh air. Drink plenty of water. Eat well – and regularly (it's always hard to keep going and remain calm when you're hungry). Try to include activity every day, which could be playing football with your children or a family walk, or some stretches after they're in bed.

## Laugh

Sometimes things are decidedly not funny. Caring for children who have experienced trauma will no doubt increase the heartache and suffering in your family, which can be incredibly overwhelming. Find some light relief by watching your favourite sitcom, stand-up from your favourite comedian or out-takes from your favourite TV show. It's OK to switch off your brain and laugh for a while – and doing so increases endorphins and reduces stress hormones, so it's beneficial for your body in the longer term too.

