Children's Home Society of North Carolina

Caring for Yourself *is* Caring for Children

A SELF CARE GUIDE FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parenting is meaningful, impactful, and deeply rewarding—but it can also be emotionally and physically demanding. Caring for yourself is not optional or selfish; it is essential to sustaining the care you provide to children. Self care looks different for everyone. What matters is finding support, setting boundaries, and giving yourself permission to rest, recharge, and ask for help.

Self Care Checklist for Foster Parents

Build and Use a Support System

You are not meant to do this alone. Your support system may include:

- **Family members or trusted friends**
- **Other foster parents who understand the journey**
- **Support groups, faith communities, or CHSNC connections**

Example:
Calling another foster parent after a hard day, asking a friend to watch the kids for an hour, or texting someone who "gets it" when things feel heavy.

Set Personal Boundaries — Taking Breaks Is Okay

You do not have to say yes to everything. Boundaries might mean:

- **Saying no to extra commitments during stressful seasons**
- **Creating quiet time after bedtime**
- **Protecting one evening a week for rest or connection**

Example:
Letting a call go to voicemail so you can finish dinner calmly or choosing to rest instead of overpreparing for tomorrow.

Seek Counseling or Peer Support When Needed

Sometimes foster parents need a safe space to process their own feelings — not just children's behaviors. Support may include:

- **Individual counseling or therapy**
- **Parent coaching or peer mentoring**
- **Talking openly with someone neutral and supportive**

Example:
Scheduling a therapy session to process stress, grief, or exhaustion — even if "nothing is wrong."

Schedule Time for Exercise, Hobbies, & Rest

Self care does not have to be complicated. It might look like:

- **Going for a short walk**
- **Reading a book before bed**
- **Gardening, crafting, or listening to music**
- **Taking a nap or going to bed earlier**

Example:
Reading one chapter of a book instead of scrolling or enjoying a quiet cup of coffee before the house wakes up.

Use Respite Care — Before You Are Overwhelmed

Respite care provides temporary, planned care for children so foster parents can rest and recharge. Respite can be used:

- **For a few hours or a weekend**
- **For appointments, rest, or personal time**
- **Before burnout happens — not just during a crisis**

Using respite is a proactive way to care for your family, not a sign of weakness.

Celebrate the Small Wins

Progress in foster care often happens in small, meaningful moments. Celebrate things like:

- **A child trying something new**
- **A calmer bedtime routine**
- **A tough day that ended with connection**
- **Showing up, even when it was hard**

Example:
Acknowledging, "Today was not easy—and I still did the best I could."

A Reminder from CHS

- **You do not have to be perfect to be a good foster parent.**
- **You do not have to do everything alone.**
- **You do not have to wait until you are exhausted to ask for help. Reach out at the first sign of hard!**

Caring for yourself helps you stay patient, present, and emotionally available—which benefits both you and the children in your care.

For foster parents licensed with Children's Home Society, log in to your Sky Prep account for additional training about this topic.

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