



Shoalhaven Managing Children Program (SMCP)

1. Look after yourself to look after your children

Parenting young children is a very labour intensive task. Parents can get so busy keeping up with the day-to-day rush that they forget the bigger picture. You can be so busy being a parent that you forget that before you were a parent you were a person and a partner. But if you neglect these parts of your life to put all your energy into parenting, your parenting will suffer too. If you keep giving out but don't take anything in to replenish your spirit, it's so easy to dry up.

The best thing parents can do for their children is to give them a happy family with happy parents in a happy relationship. In this way you are *modelling* (Refer to [Tip Sheet 11 - Teaching your child new skills](#)) the sort of positive adult behaviours you want your children to show when they grow up. To do this, you need to take care of yourself, your partner and your relationship. If you are worn out or stressed out, you can't give quality time to your children.

- Take time for yourself to smell the roses and recharge your batteries.
- Plan time to do something each week just for you. It might be something as simple as sitting down with a cuppa to read a magazine, going to the park to smell the roses and enjoy the view, going for a walk along a beach, or meeting a friend for a coffee.
- Eat regular, balanced, healthy meals and get regular exercise. It's an oldie, but a goodie – not just good for you, but it makes you feel better too.
- Take time for your partner and your relationship. Turn the TV off one evening when the children have gone to bed and spend some quality time together.
- Arrange for a relative or friend to mind the children occasionally while the two of you do something together, like going out for meal or a movie.
- Develop a network of friends, the sort of good friends you can turn to for a favour in a crisis, and for whom you'd be happy to do a favour in return.
- If you are a sole parent, developing a network of friends is even more important because you don't have the extra pair of hands in the house.
- Develop your interests – sport, hobbies, art, music, adult education courses, whatever adds to your life. Your children will grow up and leave home one day. Start planning for the rest of your life.
- Don't beat yourself up because you aren't a superparent, and your children aren't superchildren. Don't feel guilty because you can't do everything at once. **Nobody** can do all the things the magazine articles tell you to do.
- Pick out the bits of advice that are helpful and ignore the rest. If you don't find these resource pages helpful, turn off the computer and do something that is helpful, like making a cuppa and having a break.