



Texas Parent to Parent

# Taking Care of Yourself

---

By Laura J. Warren, Texas Parent to Parent

**I remember** how often I lied when people kindly said, “You’re taking care of yourself, right? You know Jason depends on you and you have to take care of yourself for him!” My answer was always, “Sure!” but under my breath, it was “Yeah, right!” My son was a micro-preemie and after many ups and downs was coming home after almost six months in the hospital, I was pumping breast milk every 2 hours or at least was supposed to be, I was contracting out our dream home, and my husband and I were the finish contractors. Taking care of myself? In whose dreams?

Unfortunately, I found out the hard way what happens when I do not take care of myself – bouts of depression that can last 4 to 6 months and loss of myself – who I am, what I need, and what I want. Those kind people were right - I could not be there for Jason when I was not there for myself. It was finally when I no longer had the desire or energy to play with him, my sweet little boy who had worked so hard all those years to learn to walk and talk, and now, Mom could no longer have fun with him. I went for help.

I have read lots of “Care for the Caregiver” lists and articles and handed many out to parents in various groups I’ve facilitated. Now, I have had a little time to really read them and think about them and the following are my favorites:

- Be gentle with yourself
- Laugh and play
- Identify the activities which are healing or fun for you and do one each day – it can be a quick as five minutes
- Use whatever method you like to gain relief – religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, exercise, reading, etc.
- Schedule “withdrawal” periods during the week – limit interruptions
- Don’t judge your level of grief and healing by how others are grieving and healing but by your internal awareness
- Give yourself permission, time and space to grieve – no matter what age your child is – there is no time limit on grief
- Respect other’s timetable and method of grieving
- Don’t pretend it doesn’t hurt at times
- Learn to recognize the difference between complaining that relieves and complaining that reinforces negative stress

**Texas Parent to Parent**

1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ★ Austin, TX 78754 ★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600  
website: [www.txp2p.org](http://www.txp2p.org) ★ Email: [info@txp2p.org](mailto:info@txp2p.org)

- Say “I choose” rather than “I should, I ought to or I have to.” Say “I won’t” rather than “I can’t.”
- Understand and accept your limitations – don’t try to be all to everyone – if you have a choice, do things you are good at and let others do the ones you’re not
- Attempt to get rid of imagined guilt and “if only’s”
- Remember that it’s okay to laugh (and very healthy)
- Remember that it’s okay to cry (and very healthy)
- Attempt to honestly express your feelings to people who will understand and not be judgmental or hurt by your honest expression
- Be open to meeting new friends who may share the ups and downs of your “new” life
- Accept your friends with all their imperfections and occasional bad advice; if they remain in your life, give them an “A” for effort
- Tell others what you want from them: help with \_\_\_\_\_, emotional support, just to listen, just to vent, etc.
- Accept others’ verbal, non-verbal and physical expressions of caring for you
- Recognize that if you decide to seek counseling, it does not mean you are weak, inadequate or crazy
- Take care of your physical needs: try to eat right, exercise, sleep – get help when necessary – a friend to walk with, medication for sleep, someone to help with meals
- Avoid masking the pain with drugs or alcohol
- Set goals for yourself, even if they are small
- It is fine to either enjoy being around other people’s babies/children or to be uncomfortable
- The decision to have or not have another child is yours alone
- If you never say “no” – what is your “yes” worth?
- And finally, give yourself permission to backslide

## Texas Parent to Parent

1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ☐★ Austin, TX 78754 ☐★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600  
 website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org ☐