



Parent Self Care: One Problem at a Time, Please!

Typical Stressed-out Scenarios:

- Getting everybody out the door in the morning is impossible.
- Nobody wants to eat the same thing for dinner.
- Your two sons take 2 hours to go to bed.
- The kids whine every time you are in the store.
- Your toddler is on you like glue every time the phone rings, making it impossible to have an adult conversation!

So...you decide to fix everything at once. A week later all of the problems seem worse, you feel totally defeated, and you just give up on everything.

Parent Care Tools To The Rescue! Pick your battles!

You are a good person, so be kind to yourself.

Pick one problem to work on at a time.

Children become very confused when a parent makes many changes at once. Pick the problem that is most important to you. Is it getting the children to bed on time? Is it having a positive mealtime? Is it starting the day out with a pleasant, morning routine?

- Pick the one problem area most important to you.
- Write down the problem area you chose, and discuss it with someone

Be Specific:

It is very hard to work on large, global goals like, *"I want our family to be happier"* or *"I want to have nicer evenings with my family."*

Try this rule of thumb:

Is your goal something you can work on in 30 minutes or less?

Here is a sample goal of a mother preparing to go grocery shopping with her children:

"For the next 30 minutes I will ignore any whining the children do in the store and I will help them be involved in the shopping. I know I can do this for 30 minutes!"

What part of your problem area can you work on in 30 minutes?

Be Ready for the Problem to Get Worse Before It Gets Better:

This often happens! Children do not like change and will often increase their negative behavior to see if they can get "the old way" back.

For example, if you set a firm bedtime routine, be prepared for your child to test it every night for a week to see if you are really dedicated to this new rule! Develop a few positive self-statements that you can use when the going gets tough:

- "A consistent bedtime will give me the hour to myself I need to rest and relax."
- "A happier morning routine will get my day off to a more relaxed, pleasant start."

DAILY REMINDER

Parents need care too! Give yourself permission to work on one family problem at a time. It is kinder to yourself and it greatly increases the chances the problem will stay fixed!