

KEEPING TABS ON PARENTING

PARENTAL SELF-CARE IS A CRUCIAL PART OF LIFE IN BRINGING UP A HEALTHY, BALANCED FAMILY

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON



With all the self-sacrifice required in parenting, I believe parental self-care is crucial. In this series, I've covered the spiritual, physical and psychological aspects for parents learning to take care of themselves. But now, it's time to focus on the final important aspect - the social you. A parent with a rich private life that includes community contribution as well as plenty of fun, launches healthy, balanced children to their own success.

Here are my top tips for nurturing the social parent

Banish the guilt! It's not selfish to seek time out, it's healthy. A bolstered social life is not only incredibly fun but inevitably provides a source of support.

Take time out with your tribe. Us mums often have way too many words for their blokes to handle. Save some for your gal pals at regular coffee catch-ups, a dinner out or even a sneaky weekend away. You'll feel rejuvenated, connected and most likely not alone in parent struggle town. Whilst they

won't often seek it out, most dads also greatly appreciate mate time. Engineering those golf days, surfing, mixing beer in those trendy breweries or whatever it is that makes a happy dad, facilitates a fulfilled and relaxed parent.

Model great relationships with your friends, your children's friends, other parents, teachers and family members. Those amazing little brains you've created are watching and often mimicking your every move. If we can show them respect for others with our language and actions, there's a great chance they'll surprise you with beautiful manners, generosity and love for the people in their community.

Nurture your friendships with returned calls, messages or random acts of kindness. Undoubtedly, most parents are run off their feet, but if we all looked a little more outward, how satisfying would it be to lighten the load of our friends with a sweet gesture or a simple "are you OK?" phone call.

Participate in community events and work

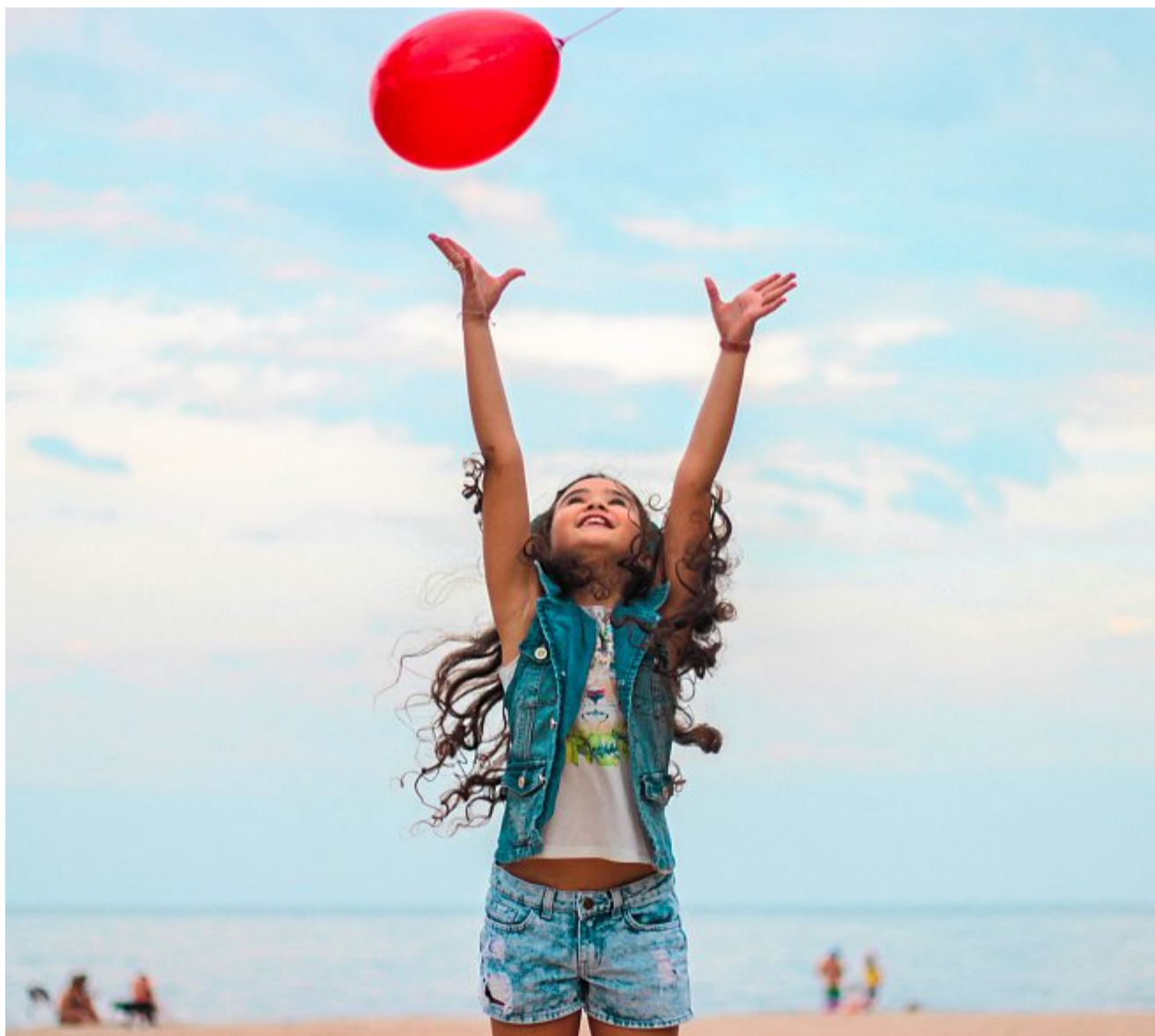
on at least one area of your life where you can give service to benefit others. Be it through a volunteer organisation or an individual seeking support, connect and assist others. There's even still time for a 5km family jaunt in the Sunshine Coast Marathon in a few weeks.

Whatever you choose as a family, appreciate the incredible joy of giving your time for the benefit of a worthy cause.

Online groups unite parents in magnificent ways. It's awesome to notice the open communication when a bunch of parents pull together to contribute when someone faces unexpected illness or strife.

Whether you join a Sunshine Coast meet-up group, find a like-minded hobby, fitness group or chat online, your children will benefit from learning from your enriched social life.

Joanne is a neuro-psychotherapist and relationship specialist at The Confidante Counselling. Email jo@theconfidantecounselling.com or visit www.theconfidantecounselling.com



KEEP KIDS ON TRACK

With school back for the second half of the year, children are busy keeping their minds active. However, due to the long periods of sitting at desks, they're also likely to have reduced levels of exercise, which can impact their overall well-being.

To help keep your kids healthy, it's a good idea to encourage increased activity. The Heart Foundation also has some easy tips for keeping your child's lunch box nutritious and getting young people outside and active.

1. Pick a day you can walk to/from school together. Even consider parking the car a little further from the school and walking.
2. Cut up food so it is easy for little fingers to eat.
3. Select comfortable school shoes that are great for walking, running and riding bicycles.
4. Dairy food is a great snack. Choose reduced-fat cheese or a tub of yoghurt.
5. Find some time to do some free-range activities like exploring your neighbourhood.
6. Include a frozen water bottle. It will help keep lunch cool and provides a cold drink.
7. Plan a quick play at the local park on free afternoons.
8. Plan ahead to avoid grabbing pre-packaged foods and involve the kids too.
9. Join your children in an after-school swim, ball game, hopscotch or skip.
10. Use a good lunch box that is well insulated or use ice bricks.