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Magazine



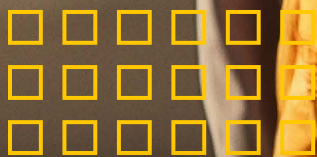
Saving On Vacations

Tips for reducing the cost of your next family trip

6
Things Your Teen Won't Ask For

Experience Gifts to Give Kids This Season

Travel Edition



November 2023 // Vol. 38 No. 11

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A note from the publisher

If you're taking a vacation this winter break, now's the time to start planning! I've included an article on page 4 on how you can save money and be better prepared for your next family adventure. November 1st was National Stress Awareness Day, find out how you can help your kids out when they're stressed on page 18. Thank you for being an ourKids Magazine reader!



Andres Flores

Author Tanni Haas, Ph.D. tells us up we prepare for our next vacation and save while doing it!

Find on page 4



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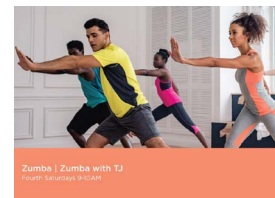
Calendar

To see more upcoming events, follow the QR code or visit our website at ourkidsmagazine.com



Ford Holiday River Parade And River Lighting Ceremony
Nov 24
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

The 42nd Annual Ford Holiday River Parade is a San Antonio tradition that offers a spectacular one-hour parade along the San Antonio River Walk. This ticketed parade begins Friday starting at the Tobin Center. Use QR for more information!



Zumba | Wellness at the Tobin
Nov 25
9:00 am - 10:00 am

Free Event - Wellness at the Tobin is a series of free public experiences designed to address aspects of living and being well. Come prepared with comfortable shoes and clothes that you can move in. This event is kid friendly!



The Briscoe Western Art Museum - Full Steam Ahead
Dec 3
All Day

Celebrate the holidays with the Briscoe's Cowboy Christmas! Families can meet Cowboy Santa and take photos with the Jolly Saint Nick in his winter Western wear. The Museum is open Thursday through Monday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



Free Family Nights at The DoSeum
Dec 4
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Explore The DoSeum's fun interactive exhibits alongside your family for free! A link for ticket reservations will be posted on thedoseum.org at 8 AM the morning of Free Family Night. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.



The Grinch | H-E-B Cinema on Will's Plaza
Dec 8
Plaza opens at 5:30 pm

Free Event - Full concessions and bar available. Bring your own lawn chair or blanket and enjoy the movie on our 32-foot LED video wall! (Chairs also available at the venue). This event is located at the Will Naylor Smith River Walk Plaza

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Taking the family on a vacation can easily end up being quite expensive. Thankfully, there are things you can do to save money on your trip. Based on my own experiences as well as conversations with other parents, I've pulled together a list of some great money-saving tips.

Save Up Money

My partner and I each put \$5 in an empty coffee tin every evening all year round. By the time the holiday season comes around, we've saved up more than \$3500. That helps cover our vacation expenses. If \$5 a day is above your budget, putting aside some amount on a daily

basis can quickly add up to a nice chunk of change.

Create A Budget

Create a detailed budget for what you're able and willing to spend on your vacation - and then stick to it. Overspending often occurs because people don't have a budget and, instead, just pay

for things without considering how much they're actually spending in total. Divide your budget into transportation, accommodations, and food, and factor in money for things that'll make the vacation extra memorable for the kids, like amusement entrance fees. You want to have fun but not to go broke!

Know The Exchange Rate

When you pick your destination, decide - as a family - where you'd like to go. It's hard to have a great vacation if there's nothing about the destination that excites any of you. Also take into account the local cost of living, if you're going to a foreign country. The foreign exchange

rate is a good indicator. Exchange rates can fluctuate widely, so be sure to get the latest information. The more foreign currency you get for each dollar, the less expensive your vacation will be.

Choose Your Accommodation Wisely

You can save lots of money

Great Ways To Save Money On Your Vacation

Story by
Tanni Haas, Ph.D.



by doing a house swap or by renting a home (think Airbnb). However, if you prefer a hotel, you can save money by staying at a distance from the city center, and making sure the place has a kitchenette or offers a complimentary breakfast. Staying outside the city center, and then driving in to see the local sites isn't only cheaper: it'll give you a chance to see where local residents live.

Invite Family Or Friends To Join You

If you plan to swap or rent a

place, invite family or friends to join you. The per-person expense for accommodation will go down dramatically. If your kids bring some of their best friends from home with them, they'll have someone to hang out with. Everything is much more fun when they can do it with a good friend.

Reserve Activities Online

Save money by creating a detailed itinerary of what you plan to do when you arrive, and then make reservations online before you go. Most tourist

sites offer deep discounts if you reserve your tickets online and in advance. Also look for family passes for extra discounts and tourist passes that cover multiple attractions. By reserving everything online before you go, you also avoid standing in long lines which leaves everyone tired and frustrated.

Look For Free Activities

Some of the most fun things you can do on any vacation won't cost you anything. Most vacation spots have special celebrations during the holidays. The best

way to find about all the free activities at your destination is to go online or to pick up brochures at the local visitors bureau.

Plan Your Meals

When it comes to food, plan your meals in advance and limit the number of times you eat out. One option is to eat breakfasts in, pack your lunches to go, and only eat out for dinner. Another way to reduce expenses is to look for restaurants where kids eat free or at a discount. Many restaurants let kids age 12 or younger eat for free; other

restaurants offer a kids' menu with smaller portions at lower prices.

Use Debit Cards Or Cash

Pay for as much as you can with a debit card or cash. Avoid credit cards: the interest rates are sky-high. Only use credit cards if you're absolutely sure you can pay them off as soon as you return, if they offer discounts on local attractions, if they don't charge any foreign transaction fees, or if you can collect lots of points for your next vacation by using them.

Buy Post Cards Instead Of Souvenirs

Many people spend a ton of money on souvenirs. They're exciting when you first get them, but the kids quickly lose interest in them and they ultimately end up unused or in the garbage. As an alternative, encourage the kids buy one postcard from each destination, which they can use to write down their favorite memories, and then mail home. It'll make for a great collection that they can keep in an album and look back on to reminisce about their vacation.





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6 Things Your Teen Needs But Doesn't Know How to Ask For

Story by
Rebecca Hastings

My daughter's eyes were filled with tears and my voice was louder than it needed to be. We were arguing over something trivial and small.

Or so I thought.

We had gone round and round about the homework she was struggling with. She was convinced she wouldn't be able to do it, and I was confident she could if she just pushed through. It was a moment when I could see her potential more than she could. She felt like she was sinking, and all I saw was her refusal to stand up in the shallow water.

After going round and round we were both exasperated. Heels dug in tight, I realized I needed to be the one to move first. All I could think was to ask a question:

"What do you need?" I pleaded.

"I don't know, Mom." And the tears came.

At that moment I knew she had no idea what she needed and it was my job to figure it out with her. This wasn't about helping her with homework; this was about helping her find her way.

Teens often don't know what they need. Most kids don't, but we step in more willingly when they're young. Now that our babies are more at eye level we look at them expecting adult choices, forgetting that sometimes they don't know how to figure things out on their own.

Here are 6 things your teen may not have a clue he or she needs.

1. Physical Touch – As our kids get older we are less likely to hug them, snuggle with them, or give them physical reassurance. This is especially true with boys because of gender

expectations. While much research has been done on the effects of physical contact on babies and young children, we forget that some of the same benefits apply to teens.

“Hugging triggers the release of feel-good hormone, oxytocin that can lower the level of stress hormone and counter its anxiety effects.” (Parenting for Brain) This dual benefit helps teens in a way they cannot verbalize, making the situation they are facing easier to handle.

When my daughter is spiraling emotionally and I gently pull her into a hug she immediately collapses against me, letting the burden leave her as she falls into me. For some, hugs may be too much, but other types of physical touch can benefit them. A hand on the shoulder or a few minutes sitting side by side is enough to bring the same benefits.

2. Sleep & Rest – The need for and benefits of sleep for teens has been highlighted recently with studies showing that teens are not getting enough sleep for proper development. While much of the recent research has focused on the sleep/school connection for teens, there is far more concerning the need for adequate rest.

Thinking back to those crazy years when I had three kids in as many years, everything is a blur. I spent five years sleep-deprived, and some days were difficult as a person who doesn't function well without her eight hours. I was irritable, unable to solve problems well, and couldn't think clearly.

Now, think of those same effects on the physically and emotionally developing teen brain.

I don't need a study to confirm that my kids function better with good sleep. This can feel tricky with teens as changing physiology, more homework, and seeking independence keep them up later and later. Shifting the focus from actual sleep time to rest has helped in our household.

Encouraging kids to get stressful tasks requiring a lot of thinking done earlier in the evening allows them to use later times for unwinding. This can be with some electronics, but research is clear that the use of electronic devices late at night is not good for anyone.

Finding things that are relaxing like a shower, reading, listening to audiobooks, journaling, drawing, or other non-stressful, quiet tasks are a great way to ease into a better sleep routine.

3. Expression – Teens often struggle with appropriate ways to express feelings. At times their feelings are new and foreign or mixed up in a way that leaves them uncertain about what they feel at all. Giving them ideas for ways to express themselves helps. And the best way to do that is by modeling.

It's no secret that telling a teen to do something doesn't always work, but if they see people they love and trust doing something, they may try it. Modeling a variety of ways to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings will help them see they have many options. Much like a buffet, when they are presented with an assortment of possibilities, they may try a few until they find what they like.

Talking is the most obvious way we express ourselves, but there are many more possibilities. Writing, drawing, creating, cooking, and building are a few ways you can foster expression. Some need something more physical so things like running, hiking, swimming, sitting at the beach, or even swinging on the swings can help.

The key is to try many things and be okay when they don't work. When teens see you finding your way, even with a struggle, it helps them know there is nothing wrong or unusual with their own.

4. Exercise – Very similar to expressing your feelings, exercise presents positive benefits that are often overlooked because we don't know how to incorporate it into our lives. Teens

especially struggle with this, even teens who play sports. While playing a sport is a physical activity that will benefit them, it can also become a responsibility or burden associated with pressure.

I don't love exercise. But I try to walk or hike regularly. It has little to do with physical health benefits and more to do with the clarity and mental well-being it fosters. Much study has been done on the benefits of exercise. It is proven that people who exercise “feel more energetic throughout the day, sleep better at night, have sharper memories, and feel more relaxed and positive about themselves and their lives.” (Helpguide.org)

All of these benefits will help teens in ways they often cannot pinpoint. Giving them ample opportunity to try different types of exercise will also help them develop habits that will serve them later in life.

Even if they groan and complain, drag the family out for a hike or take them to the pool. Head to the trampoline park, shoot hoops, or challenge your teen to a 5K. Teens tend to let exercise go at a time when they may need it most. You can make sure they still have the opportunity to get moving. Plus, they may love the chance to beat you in a race.

5. Listening – This tip is the one most parents roll their eyes at and brush past. They often find themselves in the “My-kid-never-tells-me-anything” camp or the “My-kid-never-stops-talking” camp. Neither of which sounds very fun.

We are often surprised to learn that teens want better communication with their parents. As parents, we sometimes lack the time, interest, or skills necessary to effectively listen to our teens.

Listening is not always easy, and sometimes the results may not be noticeable, but fostering an environment of caring about

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what your teen has to say is helpful. Even if it is about the latest basketball team or what someone said to someone else that made another girl cry, this environment will benefit both you and your teen.

6. Grace – This idea is one you won't find many places, but I have found it to be one of the most important things to teach my teen. Teens today are growing up in a high-pressure society. AP courses, college, grad school, and high-paying jobs all feel like necessities to make it in this great big busy world. Sometimes teens are so busy trying to be the best and to get ready for the next step that they are miserable.

If the only things we ask about school have to do with grades, sports, and college applications we are showing our kids that those are the most important things. When they lose a game or get a low grade it suddenly becomes devastating. We have the power to change that.

My daughter came home one day upset about her math quiz grade. She was crying because she wanted it to be higher, to be better, to be perfect. After listening to her talk for a few minutes I asked one question: "Do you know what I got on my math quiz in 7th grade?"

She looked at me with wide eyes, eager to see how we measured up against one another. "No."

"Neither do I." She may have rolled her eyes when I said this, but it showed her that it's okay to let things go sometimes. We need to give ourselves grace when we make mistakes. That is what enables us to learn well and move forward without anger or bitterness.

Look for ways you can teach your teen about grace today. It may mean the difference between a stressful meltdown and a small bump in the road.

And one final note, this idea of grace works

for you, too. As parents, we want so much to get it right, but the truth is sometimes we will miss the mark. Give yourself grace in those moments and move forward. It's worth it.

2-Minute Action Plan

Spend a few minutes thinking about the best way to start making changes in your family.

How can you give yourself grace today? It's easy to fall into the trap that you should have done things differently, but remembering that you can start a positive cycle today with you can help.

When was the last time you offered your teen or tween physical contact? It's easy to lose track of this as kids get older and become independent. Think of one thing you will do today to offer my child physical comfort. Some ideas include a hug, sitting next to him on the couch, offering to read a chapter of her book out loud snuggling in bed, or simply putting your hand on his shoulder and telling him to have a great day.

Think about how you want to respond the next time your child is struggling emotionally. While every tip doesn't work the same for every situation, knowing what you will try will help you be prepared.

Long-Term Action Plan

The next week or two offers a great opportunity to put more of these ideas in place. Spend a few minutes brainstorming how to meet each of these six needs. Remember it will not be perfect. This is not a checklist of things to do but ideas to try.

As you try ideas make note of which ones work well. Most will take multiple tries to see a difference but don't be discouraged. Notice which ones your child likes. See what helps him or her most and keep practicing that. You will both reap the benefits of these simple ideas when you thoughtfully put them to use.



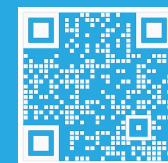
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7 Experience Gifts to Give Kids This Season

Story by
Sarah Lyons

Does it feel like your kids already have more toys than they could ever want? I love the holidays and the spirit of gift giving but every year I wonder what toys my kids could possibly want and where they will go in our already crowded home? Experience gifts are a great gift option that has benefits for kids, parents, and other gift givers. With an experience gift, your child will create great memories while enjoying something they may not have had the opportunity to try otherwise. An added bonus is that there is no

need to store the item after the child has grown tired of playing with it. Here are some great experience gift ideas for every child on your list.

Season pass

One of my family's favorite gifts is a seasonal family pass to local attractions. This not only saves us money but it also encourages

us to get out, enjoy our city, and make memories along the way. Some attractions to consider are zoo admission, a local museum (consider a children's museum if your children are of the right ages), amusement park tickets, or swimming season passes to the area pool.

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A subscription box is a great gift idea for those that are especially tweens and teens that are hard to buy for. They are now available for any age, interest, and price range. If your child loves science, reading, art, games, or sports; chances are there is a subscription box that will fit their interests.

Classes and camps

Consider giving the gift of prepaid classes or camps that fit your child's interest. Some ideas include dance, gymnastics, sports, cooking, art, or music. Classes and camps can be really expensive but are worth the money and give kids the opportunity to try something new.

Travel

Consider combining your

holiday and vacation budget to take a family trip. Whether it's an overnight trip to a nearby indoor water park or a cross country trip, traveling is a great way to expose your child to different places and build family memories at the same time.

Tickets

Tickets to a favorite sporting event, concert, or show is

a great idea for a gift for the whole family. Combine the gift with a T-shirt to wear to the event or a backstage tour to make the day more memorable.

Box it up

If your budget is a little smaller, try putting together several things in a box for your child to enjoy. Create a movie box with a movie or video rental gift card, candy, popcorn, and a

warm blanket so the family can enjoy a movie night at home. Combine art supplies, a sketch book, paints, and other craft items for an art box. You could also put together a cooking box, ingredients for homemade playdough with cookie cutters, or a gardening box with seeds, gardening gloves and tools. Get creative and combine your child's interests to put together a customized box.

Adventure gifts

For the adventurous child, look for experience gifts that give them a chance to try something they wouldn't normally get to do. Some ideas could include horseback riding, fishing, camping, rock climbing, indoor skydiving, or a day at a gym with an obstacle course or trampolines.



An advertisement for a science fair. On the left, a dark grey box contains the text: "SCIENCE FAIR", "We are thrilled to invite you to participate in our upcoming 2024 ourKids Science & Engineering Fair for Homeschools and Small Private Schools – a platform where innovative minds meet scientific curiosity.", "Learn more at: ourKidsMagazine.com/science-fair", and the "ourKids" logo. On the right, a photograph shows four students in a classroom setting. A circular graphic with a lightbulb and circuitry is overlaid on the photo. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner of the photo area.

What To Do When Your Kids Are Stressed

Story by
Tanni Haas, Ph.D.



November 1 is National Stress Awareness Day, a great occasion to consider what you can do when your kids complain about being really stressed. How do you help them cope with it? Experts agree on the following points:

Listen To Your Kids: What's Going On?; How Are They Feeling?

It's important to sit your kids down and ask them what's going on and how they are feeling. Listen calmly and non-judgmentally to what they have to say. "Children learn (and take cues) from the adults around them," says child psychologist Dr. Lyn O'Grady, "so it's important for adults to be mindful of how they approach stressful situations." If you overreact to what they are telling you, they most likely will overreact, too. But if you stay calm and collected, you will have a much easier time helping

them cope with whatever it is they are dealing with. As clinical psychologist Dr. Barbara Greenberg succinctly puts it, "No child wants to talk to a parent who is losing her cool."

Child psychotherapist Katie Hurley, the author of *The Happy Kids Handbook*, says that "knowing that you will listen and help them empowers them to work through their stress, instead of stuffing it down and potentially making it worse." Remember that your kids are not looking for you to solve all of their problems once and for all. Rather, they are looking for you to truly listen to them as a way for them to work through their problems on their own. "Sometimes," says child psychologist Dr. Jamie Howard, "parents avoid having conversations with kids because they're worried they won't say the right thing or they won't

photography
BY. EMMETT
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know how to answer their questions.” But the truth is that there is no such thing as the one right answer. The only wrong thing is failing to make yourself available to your kids when they need you the most.

Reassure Your Kids That They Are Strong and Capable

Listening to your kids is an important first step, but you also need to reassure them that

they are strong and capable of coping with whatever it is that’s stressing them out. Experts agree that you should try to convince your kids that it’s better to confront their stressors head on than to shy away from them. “If a child faces his or her fears,” says professor of child psychology Dr. Amy Przeworski, “the child will learn that the anxiety reduces naturally over time.”

Dr. Przeworski says that it’s also

important to cultivate as positive outlook as possible since stressed kids have a tendency to get lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism: “They may focus on how the glass is half empty instead of half-full and worry about future events. The more that you are able to focus on your child’s positive attributes and the good aspects of a situation, the more that will remind your child to focus on the

positives.”

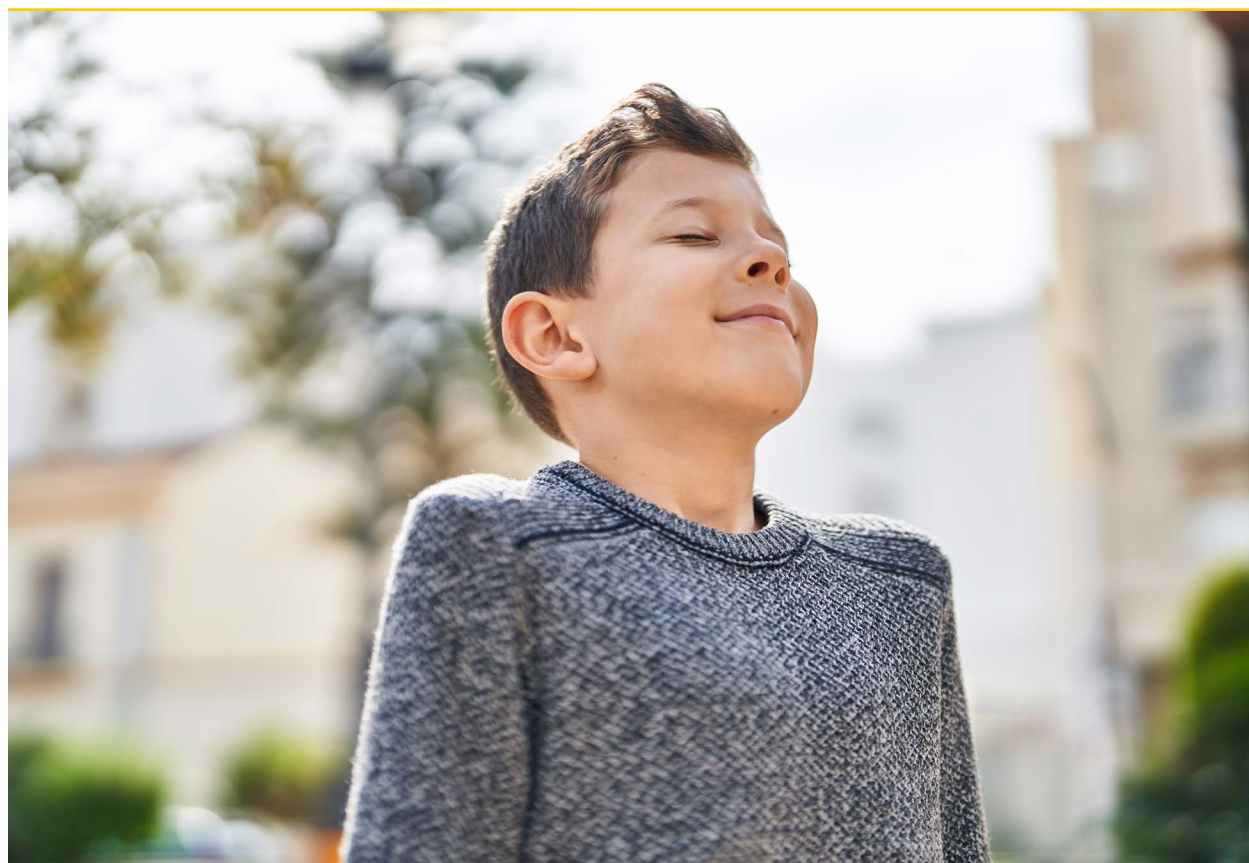
It’s useful to give your kids some perspective by reminding them of how they dealt with similar situations in the past which turned out all right. When confronted by a stressful situation, it’s easy for kids and adults like to lose perspective and forget the previous times they confronted a similar situation and that the outcome was not so bad after all.

Help Your Kids Experiment With Various Coping Techniques

Once your kids are reassured that they are truly capable of handling stressful situations, try to experiment with various coping techniques. A one-size-fits-all strategy for dealing with stress doesn’t exist, but certain time-tested techniques have proven effective.

One useful coping technique is

to have your kids write down what’s causing them to be stressed. It teaches them to articulate what’s bothering them instead of bottling it up, and it helps them work through the problem and what to do about it. Mrs. Hurley suggests that they write down their stressors “on a piece of paper, read them to you, and then tear them up and throw them away for the night. This helps kids say their worries



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out loud and let go of them.”

Another useful coping technique is to aim for balance in your kids’ lives. Instead of insisting that your kids do well at school at all costs, emphasize that to be happy and stress-free, kids also need time for play and physical exercise. Dr. Greenberg suggests that parents sit down with their kids “and come up with a well-balanced schedule that includes all three of these important

aspects of life.” When engaged in play or physical exercise, kids have the time to let their minds be free to come up with creative solutions to their sources of stress.

Make Sure Your Kids’ Physical Needs Are Met

Finally, make sure your kids’ physical needs are met. As Dr. Greenberg puts it, “none of us at any age can deal with pressure

effectively if we’re exhausted and hungry.” This last piece of advice applies to you as much as it does to your kids. If you are not well-rested and satisfied, you won’t be able to listen to and support your kids as much as you need to, since your mind and body will be focused on other things.



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