

Reading a chapter of your book – in **daylight**, it's modelling a love of reading, right?

Going to the toilet **when you need to** and/or going to the toilet **by yourself...lock that door!**

Oh no you've run out of milk, you'll have to pop to the shops **alone** to get some more (remember to hide the milk first)

Watch a funny video on YouTube: watch more than one, **laugh as loud as you can** even if it annoys other people.

Text rageful expletives to your best friend (maybe pre-warn them it might be coming at some point)

Take the kids to the park but wear headphones so you can listen to music or a podcast at the same time. Yes you may be judged but you and I both know **you are doing the best you can with what you have right now**

Go to bed a **little bit** earlier: not enough so you feel cheated but **enough** to give you **slightly more** energy in the morning

Listening to **your** favourite music or podcast in the car: **you don't have to** listen to music you don't like every single time!

Stand outside your front door alone for 10 seconds (don't tell anyone, you could even pretend to be taking the rubbish out, no-one is following that)

Brush your teeth for longer than 30 seconds. Take 2 minutes... why not **sit down** whilst you're doing it, perhaps even **lock the bathroom door!**

Say 'no' to anything that adds to your pile of demands and depletes your resources (**or if you just don't want to**)

Wash your face: **buy yourself** a really nice face-wash and a soft towel and **hide them!**

Say 'yes' if it **makes life easier** temporarily, pick your battles.

Paying for **childcare** even if it isn't for 'paid work'.

Repeat after me "I **aim to be an imperfect parent**"

Arrange to do the food shop **by yourself** or arrange to do it online and **use the time** to go and have a solo coffee!

Giving all responsibility to someone else for a mutually agreed amount of time.

Ready meals are ok, really. If making dinner is causing you stress it's ok to take full advantage of convenience food.

Buy takeaway coffee/tea/food so you **don't have to make it for yourself** – receiving nurture from others (even paid) **keeps blocked care from the door**

Embrace screen time – a 3 hour stint is ok sometimes if the alternative is a group of wildly dysregulated people living together

Take time to do something at **your own pace**

Eat... breakfast, lunch & dinner – you don't even have to eat with anyone, on your own after everyone else has eaten is fine.

Drink a glass of your favourite soft drink and **hide it** in a tea mug so no-one asks for a sip

Having a cup of tea/coffee **before** you make breakfast for everyone.

Shower **slowly**: it is ok to **take time** to wash in a slow and regulating way.

Super **comfortable** underwear – bliss.

Survival Self-Care

Survival Care

Looking after ourselves comes in many different forms. Traditionally we can look at popular 'self-care' suggestions; having a bath, meditation, a yoga class, getting out for a pint with mates - even a weekend away if we can manage it - and these are all valid and wonderful ways to feel nourished and refreshed.

Self-care is a luxury, the ideal. It's what we can aspire to and maybe sometimes even experience. However, as parents to children with trauma, we can't wait for the ideal, we need to rest right now before the next battle. We can't wait for a night off in four days time or even until after bedtime tonight to re-charge. Sometimes we need to stop right now when the kids are with us and reach through to the next layer of 'self-care', deeper down to 'survival care'.

Survival care is different from person to person, family to family. Survival care is letting the kids watch 3 hours of TV every-day because it gives everyone some time off from fighting, from feeling their pain. It's filling lunch boxes with pre-made food so you have a valuable extra 10 minutes to negotiate getting everyone out of the door calmly. It's saying no to helping at the school fair or babysitting for a friend because they did it for you. It's paying for an extra hour of childcare so you can sit and experience your home quietly and safely and choosing not to feel guilty about it. It's taking your teenagers to the cinema or your kids to the park, plugging in your headphones and enjoying that podcast you've been waiting to listen to. It's eating dinner on the floor because the table has too much conflict, too many war stories. It's letting them sleep on the mattress by your bed as it's the only way you all sleep well, even if your mother tells you that it's not normal. It's phoning in sick and spending the day in bed watching trashy TV or buying overpriced take away coffee every day from your favourite shop because it's something someone else has made just for you.

Survival care goes deeper because it has to for us to find peace in the middle of the wars that rage on inside our child. It gives us the energy and the emotional capacity to be regulated and open when our child needs us to bear their pain and face it with them. Survival care prevents us from developing secondary trauma of our own.

This is the purpose of survival care, it leaves everyone with time to rest, releases tension, alleviates the pressure, slows the pace, gives us all some room to breathe.

