

It's Okay to Ask for Help!



The rollercoaster of parenting is exhausting. One day you have so many parenting wins you feel like people should be consulting you about how to be a parent! The very next day is like someone gave you a whole new set of children, and nothing seems to go right.

So, if we all acknowledge parenting is exhausting, why is it so hard to ask for help? Some parents say...

"I'm just too busy & don't make time for myself. I feel like I should already know what to do."

"Too embarrassed and scared."

"I just shut down and don't want to talk to people."

"My parents always told me to figure it out myself. I just don't want to burden anyone."

Consider this: if a parent friend of yours had a 'who-replaced-my-kids?' moment, how would you react? Would you tell them "Whoa. You need to keep that to yourself- how could you not know what to do? You should be embarrassed to even think you need help!" More than likely, you would show compassion, understanding, and maybe even laugh at the unpredictability of it all! Dr. Kristen Neff promotes self-compassion, which challenges us to extend the same compassion to ourselves that we would a friend. How would things be different if we responded with compassion to ourselves and said, "You are just so overwhelmed and you can't possibly do it all, because no one could!"

Dr. Brene Brown tells us, "the truth is, rarely can a response make something better. What makes something better is connection." Connect with others by giving them an opportunity to be distracted from their own troubles and help you with yours. Researchers have discovered that when we help others, our brain releases chemicals like dopamine, that elevate our mood and make us feel better. How awesome! Asking others for help makes *them* feel better!

So, what should I say?

- 1 Be kind to yourself.** If you are beating yourself up, try changing how you talk to yourself by thinking about what you would say to a friend. It might sound something like, "I am really overwhelmed right now, but anyone would be in my situation. Nobody can do all of this alone, and neither can I." Pair that with an action that makes you feel better - a deep breath, self-hug, a walk... whatever works for you.
- 2 You don't know what you don't know.** Sometimes it can be so overwhelming that you don't even know what would be helpful. That's ok. Just saying to someone, "I'm just so overwhelmed, and I don't know what to do" starts the problem-solving process, and you can work together to find a solution.
- 3 Be honest.** Just because a suggestion was made, doesn't mean you have to take it. If you don't think that will work for you, remain calm and say so, and keep working toward something that will be helpful. You could try, "that sounds like it might be a good idea, but I don't think that would work because _____."
- 4 Take action and report back.** It is always nice to hear about successes, especially when you had a hand in it! Telling your friend about how your conversation helped strengthens your relationship and will make it more likely they will help in the future.