

Filling Your Cup: Giving Yourself Grace
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We celebrate February by commemorating love in various forms. Valentine’s Day reminds us of the superficial aspects of romance which fund florists, candy companies, and jewelry stores. However, in addition to giving and receiving love to and from our partners, as pediatricians, we tend to give more than we receive. Balancing our family members’ needs and our patients’ needs can be very tricky. If there is an imbalance, we may hear the repercussions.

It is important to give ourselves grace. We are all immensely dedicated to meeting the needs of others. When we think we did not, it can cause a cascade of

anxiety, shame, and fear. We ultimately want to make people happy. Shame is a powerful force. Brene Brown defines shame as “the intensely painful belief that we are flawed and unworthy of love and belonging, a feeling that drives us into survival modes, like fight or flight or people-pleasing.” When we are caught in the wheel of people-pleasing and shame, it is easy to carry the burdens of the world on our shoulders. Our shoulders can balance only so much.

I recall times when I was unable to see a patient in my office because we were either closed for a holiday or didn't have the times the parent wanted. I always felt bad, and considered making exceptions. I did not want them to switch offices or question my integrity as a pediatrician. When people are feeling out of control, they control what is easy, pulling everyone into the cyclone. It is easy to adapt a role as a savior to make sure no one is caught up in the storm.

When there is an event when we haven't fulfilled someone's expectations, it is easy to feel a sense of shame. In these situations, giving ourselves grace balances the negative perception of ourselves. First, we should take a pause and breathe. A slow breath and help us imagine releasing any tension or worry as we exhale. Then, we have to remember that we are always doing our best. Our best can vary, but we are always giving our 100% in the moment. Finally, we should think about what went well throughout our day. Successes during the day do not have to always be patient-related. Maybe our kids were ready to go to school 10 minutes early. Maybe our partners packed us lunch and left a sweet note. Maybe traffic was less intense and we had an

extra five minutes to relax before starting the day. It is also vital to take moments for ourselves during the day, whether it is enjoying a cup of coffee or tea or taking a walk.

We may dwell on what we need to do better. Growth is part of the human experience, and in medicine, we are continuously learning. When it comes to the human body, there are many things that happen that are not in our control. We have to be grounded in our expertise, experience, and dedication. We only want to see the best outcomes. We should speak to ourselves with the same compassion with which we speak to others. Our authenticity will shine, as we give ourselves grace and compassion.