



ask the life coach

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I love me, I love me not

If you haven't heard this, or haven't heard it in a while, let me remind you, "If you don't love and take care of yourself first, you won't be able to love and care for others."

Just because you can do it all, doesn't mean you have to do it all. This is a wake up call to all martyrs trying to be all things to all people. As was so cleverly revealed in the book *The Mommy Myth* by Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels, as women have made headway in the working world they've been bombarded simultaneously with the immense pressure to provide Martha Stewart caliber domestic performances. So instead of feeling constantly inadequate, know that it's not possible to do it all. Spreading yourself so thin doesn't serve you, your family, your career or your friends. Soon you'll have nothing left to give.

Teach those around you how to treat you

Your daughters watch you to see how they should behave when they grow up. Your sons watch you to see how they should treat a woman. Stop and answer this question honestly, "Would you be proud if they modeled your current behaviour?" If you find yourself spinning out of control, feeling tired, stressed and frazzled, it's time to break the cycle:

1. Take a look at your beliefs and evaluate whether they're still true for you. What expectations do you have of yourself? Are they realistic? Are they your own or leftover from another generation? Do your friends and family really expect these things of you, or do you only believe you

have to play all these roles? Once you've identified beliefs that no longer serve you, let them go and move on. Next time, buy muffins for the bake sale instead of baking all night.

2. An easy trap to fall prey to is thinking that nobody could possibly do what you do, or at least not as well. Get over yourself. Let someone else do it. Sure, things may be different, but allowing others to participate actually benefits them. Engaging your kids in helping with the housework fosters a healthy sense of responsibility and independence.

A key skill

Practice the most important two letter word in the English language: "NO". How many times this week can you use this word? Use it to replace the automatic "sure, I'll do it" response that may be your current default. For those who want to go to the advanced level, say "no" without an explanation. Trust me – you'll learn to love it.

What's next?

You've redefined your beliefs. Changed the unsupportive habit of doing everything, into new loving habits to take care of you; you know what you have to do and have delegated the rest. It's time to relax, indulge in an activity that fills you up. Go to a yoga class, have a bubble bath or curl up with a good book – "A happy mom means a happy family". H&L

If you have a burning life question, please email lifecoach@healthandlifestyle.ca