

Opinion: Refuel your body and mind

By Lindsay Simon

What fills you up? When you are tired, worn down and need some refueling, what do you do?

These are just a few questions I ask parents and caregivers. For many, the daily demands are overwhelming and it is difficult to find time for self-care and to refuel. However, these are some of the very things your body and mind need to avoid burnout, regain energy, and provide support for your children and family.



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Imagine your body is like a car. What happens if you don't refill your gas tank before it reaches empty? Maybe you run out of gas on the way to work and have to call a friend or a tow truck. You are then late for work, have to reschedule meetings, need to find a ride for your kids, and the list goes on. Your day spirals costing time, money, and energy.

Just like your car, refueling your personal gas tank should be a non-negotiable. You might feel like you don't have the time to get gas, but you have to force yourself to refill the tank. Because if your car's tank reaches empty, the consequences are greater and harder to recover from.

What are some of the consequences that you have experienced for letting your personal gas tank go to empty? Did you lose your temper? Did you say unkind words to a co-worker or a loved one? It is important to know what motivates you to change so that, in the moment, self-care doesn't seem like a waste of time.

To refuel your body and your mind, take a few moments and write down what helps you relax and what brings you joy. Seriously, stop reading this article and find a pen and paper now. List at least three things. Then, write down when these things can get done and who will support you in accomplishing this goal.

This exercise is one of a variety of different techniques you can use to increase your parental resiliency. Resiliency is defined as the ability to recover from difficult situations and experiences. This is a very important quality for parents and caregivers. Inevitably, families will experience difficult times. How you respond to these difficulties will shape your children's coping skills and how they deal with tough situations.

Parental resiliency is one of five core protective factors I teach in the parent leadership workshop series. This is a fun, interactive class that also covers child development, social and emotional competency, and ways to advocate for your children. The next parent leadership workshop series starts today and all parents and caregivers are welcome to attend.

Lindsay Simon is a licensed marriage and family therapist, clinical director, and owner of A Balanced Life in South Lake Tahoe.