

NAME WITHHELD THE ISHA HATZARFATIT SHOWS US THAT OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE ARE DOORWAYS TO BLESSINGS

family **first**

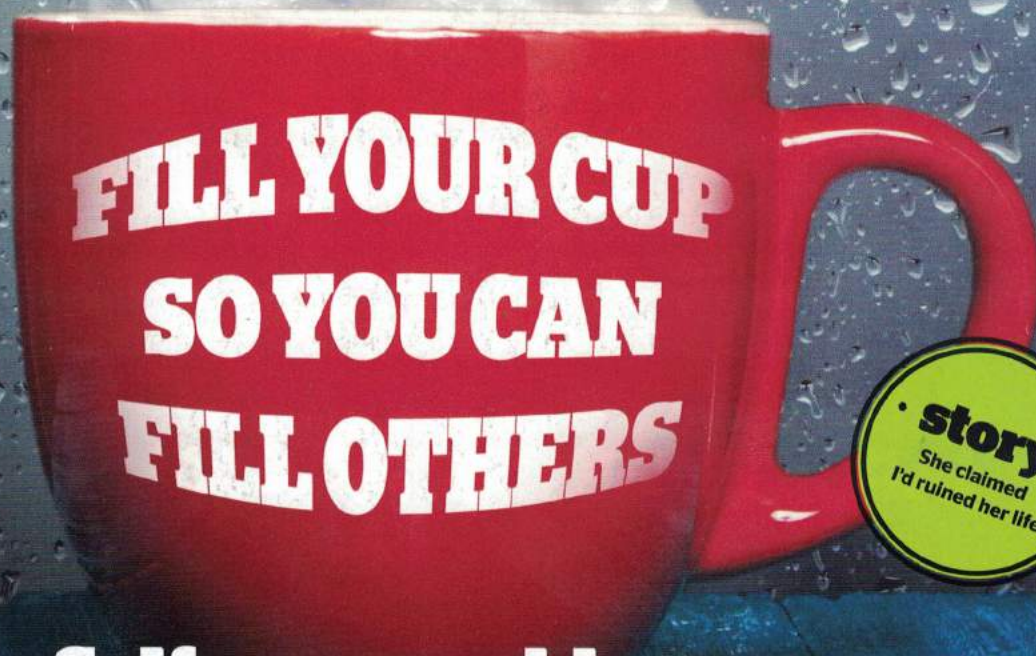
THE JEWISH WOMAN'S WEEKLY

Turning Tides

I grew up in silence —
and filled my own home
with song

ON PINS AND NEEDLES

In the market
for a sewing machine?
Here's what to look for



**Self-care enables us
to keep going and keep giving**

FAMILY REFLECTIONS

"Permission to feel what you feel"
allows kids to work through feelings

SEVEN FACTS

Preventing periodontal disease
is more than just gum luck

CONNECT TWO

A crucial equation:
Thoughts lead to feelings lead to actions

Issue 525
13 Teves 5777
January 11, 2017

Mishpacha

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Sew Easy with the Right Machine

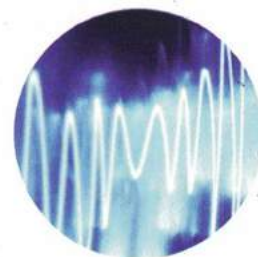
C. Rosenberg

A dozen brands. Tens of models. Hundreds of features. Just thinking about purchasing a sewing machine can be overwhelming. Sewing experts shed light on what both novice and experienced seamstresses should look for when getting a perfect-for-you machine.
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Permission to Pamper

Sarah Glazer

How is it that some women can give and give and still feel full while others are on the verge of collapse? The answer, asserts relationship educator Julie Lurie, is self-care. How this oft-neglected activity can rejuvenate you — and help you revamp your relationships.
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Turning Tides: Without Words

As told to Leah Gebber

Although signing was the normal way of communicating with my parents, our conversations were quite limited. There was no chatting about my day, no small talk. My parents had been cut off from the world so deeply that they found it hard to connect with us on a normal, day-to-day level.
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"Tzippy is going through a rough time in Yiddishkeit, and apparently you caused it.

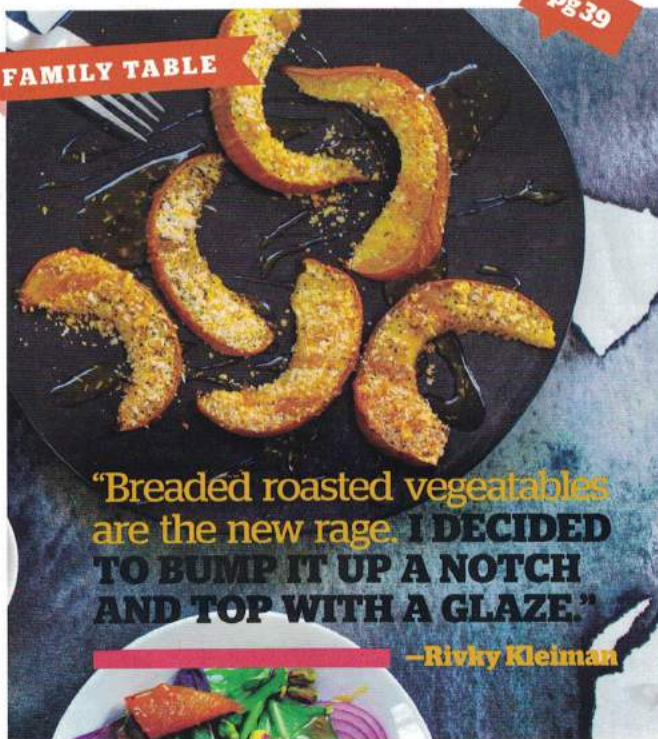
She doesn't want to forgive you."

STORY // FALLING BETWEEN THE CRACKS

As told to Miriam Schweid

FAMILY TABLE

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"Breaded roasted vegetables are the new rage. I DECIDED TO BUMP IT UP A NOTCH AND TOP WITH A GLAZE."

—Rivky Kleiman

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HOW IS IT THAT SOME WOMEN CAN GIVE AND GIVE AND STILL FEEL FULL WHILE OTHERS ARE ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE? THE ANSWER, ASSERTS RELATIONSHIP EDUCATOR JULIE LURIE, IS SELF-CARE. HOW THIS OFT-NEGLECTED ACTIVITY CAN REJUVENATE YOU — AND HELP YOU REVAMP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

“Whenever I hear a client going on and on about her husband, complaining about what he doesn’t do for her, the first question I ask is about her self-care,” says Julie Lurie, a relationship educator and coach based in Chicago, Illinois.

“Is she getting enough sleep? Exercising? When’s the last time she treated herself to something nice? Or went out with a friend? There’s a basic formula in marriage that when our self-care goes down, our tolerance for our husbands also plummets.

“So many *shalom bayis* issues start with lack of self-care,” continues Julie, who runs marriage seminars and *shalom bayis vaadim*, as well as teaching *kallos* and lecturing regularly. “If we’re not taking good care of ourselves, we have no fuel to put into our marriages... or anything else. I could teach my clients a hundred ways to increase *shalom bayis*, but if they don’t have good self-care, they won’t be able to implement any of them.”

For many of us, self-care is a novel concept. We’re so used to putting others first — our husbands, children, parents, the next-door neighbor who just had a baby, the *choleh* who needs a ride to

PERMISSION to

improve

SARAH GLAZER

the doctor — that we rarely get around to meeting our own needs.

"I once went five days without a shower because I always found something else I needed to take care of first," shares Aliza, who was blessed with three children in quick succession. "I was so busy running after the kids every morning that I didn't eat breakfast until my husband walked in the door to relieve me.

"I quit my job after my third was born to be a better mother, but I was far worse. I was impatient, angry, over-reactive. I spoke to my *rebbetzin* and she stressed that I needed more time for myself, but I dismissed the idea. I didn't see the connection. It took me *years* to finally see there's a direct correlation between self-care and my ability to be a happy wife and mother."

When we don't take care of ourselves, we're more prone to a profusion of problems, including exhaustion, stress, sickness, insecurity, weepiness, and burn out. "The main problem is that we end up living life reactively," says Julie. "If our child does something we don't like, we don't have enough energy to think about how we want to ideally respond. We don't have enough fuel to make a decision that's in line with our vision of who we want to be. We're working on autopilot because we're so emotionally and physically drained."

"Whenever I forget about self-care, I pay for it," says Esther, a mother of six, including 17-month-old twin girls, one of whom has Down's. "The days I don't take care of myself, I'm terrible at taking care of everyone else."

WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?

"Some people think self-care is a secular idea," says Julie. Indeed, it's lauded by many secular thinkers, including Laura Doyle, author of the best-selling book, *The Surrendered Wife*. But self-care is actually a Torah concept. "In *Shemoneh Pera-kim*, the Rambam talks about how, after

"THE BUSIER YOU ARE, THE MORE SELF-CARE YOU NEED. IT'S AN EQUATION — THE MORE YOU NEED TO GIVE, THE MORE EMOTIONAL FUEL YOU NEED"


working hard, we need to recharge. He says that both externally and internally, we need rest and rejuvenation," Julie teaches.

"You can also look at *Derech Hashem*. The Ramchal divides all our positive actions into two categories — *mitzvos* and things done out of necessity. What's considered a 'necessity'? The Ramchal defines it as anything that gets us ready and able to serve Hashem, so long as it's within halachah."

This idea is expounded upon by Rav Yosef Yehuda Leib Bloch in his *sefer Shiurei Daas* (ma'amar "*Pales Maagal Raglecha*"). "He writes that anything within halachah that allows a person to feel the strength of his capabilities, that motivates him and brings him joy, is included in the category of 'necessity.' This includes, Rav Bloch says, assorted physical pleasures, as well as going for a walk or spending time with friends — each person according to what he needs.

"Not doing so, Rav Bloch stresses, will cause a person to lack the *chiyus*, life energy, that's needed to serve Hashem," Julie says. "Rav Bloch even goes so far as to





call this person a '*choteh al hanefesh*,' one who mistreats his soul."

Self-care is a necessity because it makes you a better giver — "which is what we want more than anything else in the world," says Julie. "Look at Chava. Why was she so tempted by the fruit? Rashi says it's because the snake told her, 'you'll be like Hashem, a creator.' In *Alei Shur*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe writes that this is the deepest desire of every person: to be a creator. He explains that even a small act of *chesed* is an act of building and creating. When we do *chesed*, we're completing what's lacking — and that's essentially creation.

"But here's the part no one tells us about," Julie continues. "In order to give, we need to fill ourselves up. That's why I stress self-care so much."

Taking care of yourself means eating three meals a day, showering, brushing your teeth, dressing nicely, going to the doctor, getting enough sleep. "So many of us ignore these basic needs," says Julie. "I remember Rabbi Leib Kelemen speaking about how if you're going to be compassionate toward others, you have to be compassionate toward yourself first. What if your son walked in on Friday afternoon famished, and asked for lunch. Would you ever reply, 'We have a really busy day, so we're skipping lunch.' No! You'd *never* speak to your son that way. So why do we sometimes speak to ourselves that way?"

Beyond the fundamental needs of the body, self-care is about doing things that make you feel "full." What these will be depends on your personality, age, and culture. During certain stages of life, talking to a friend once a day might be critical, at another stage, it might be talking less. "When I was 20, grocery shopping by myself wasn't on my self-care list," laughs Julie, a mother of five.

As a homework assignment, Julie pushes

her clients to write a list of 25 self-care activities. "Some women draw a blank after number three," says Julie. "They've neglected themselves for so long that they can't even remember what they enjoy doing. The mere process of writing the list can be an act of self-discovery. They get to know themselves all over again."

While food often makes a repeat appearance on many women's self-care list — indulging in a favorite treat, eating out, baking, experimenting with new recipes, leafing through cookbooks — there are countless other self-care activities. For instance: playing an instrument, knitting, swimming, listening to a *shiur*, window shopping, reading, *davening*, writing, sewing, polishing your nails, running, organizing your closets, drawing, saying Tehillim, going out or speaking with friends, dancing, singing, having one-on-one time with a parent or grandparent, painting, or going on a date with your husband.

For Esther, exercise is a pivotal part of her self-care. But one Sunday, after a long day with the kids, what helped her recharge was a little solo trip to Target. "I came downstairs that morning thinking to myself, *I'm going to be a great mom today*," recalls Esther. "But then one kid had a high fever. A twin was throwing up. It was freezing cold and we were stuck at home. Everything felt so chaotic and overwhelming. That night, I left the house and ended up at Target. I was strolling the aisles by myself. No one was demanding anything of me. I had space to think. And my mindset totally shifted. I felt happy. Suddenly, a high fever, a vomiting kid — these things weren't such a big deal. I could handle it."

Timing also matters. "My three big kids get out of school at four and I used to work up to the last minute, racing to get everything done before they came home,"

says Aliza. "I was so exhausted, that instead of being attentive and warm, I was unable to deal with normal childhood antics. Now, half an hour before my kids come home, I resist the urge to finish that one last thing and I take care of myself — sometimes it's eating a small meal, sometimes listening to music or reading. I devote the time entirely to myself, so I'm refreshed and smiling when I pick up my kids."

The first step is creating the list. "The second is committing to it," says Julie. Every single day, you should be doing three — or more — activities from your self-care list. And while you're doing them, have in mind what you're trying to accomplish through this self-care, whether it's to be a more conscious parent or to improve your *shalom bayis*.

YOU DO HAVE THE TIME

By far the most common excuse women give for lack of self-care is that they don't have a spare minute. "My answer to this is that you don't have time for all the negative consequences that arise when you *don't* do self-care," says Julie.

Julie brings a parable from Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a book originally designed for workaholics who were having nervous breakdowns — in part because they "didn't have time" for self-care. "Imagine it's a hot day and you see a man trying to cut down a tree. He's sawing and sawing, sweat dripping from his face. But he isn't making much progress.

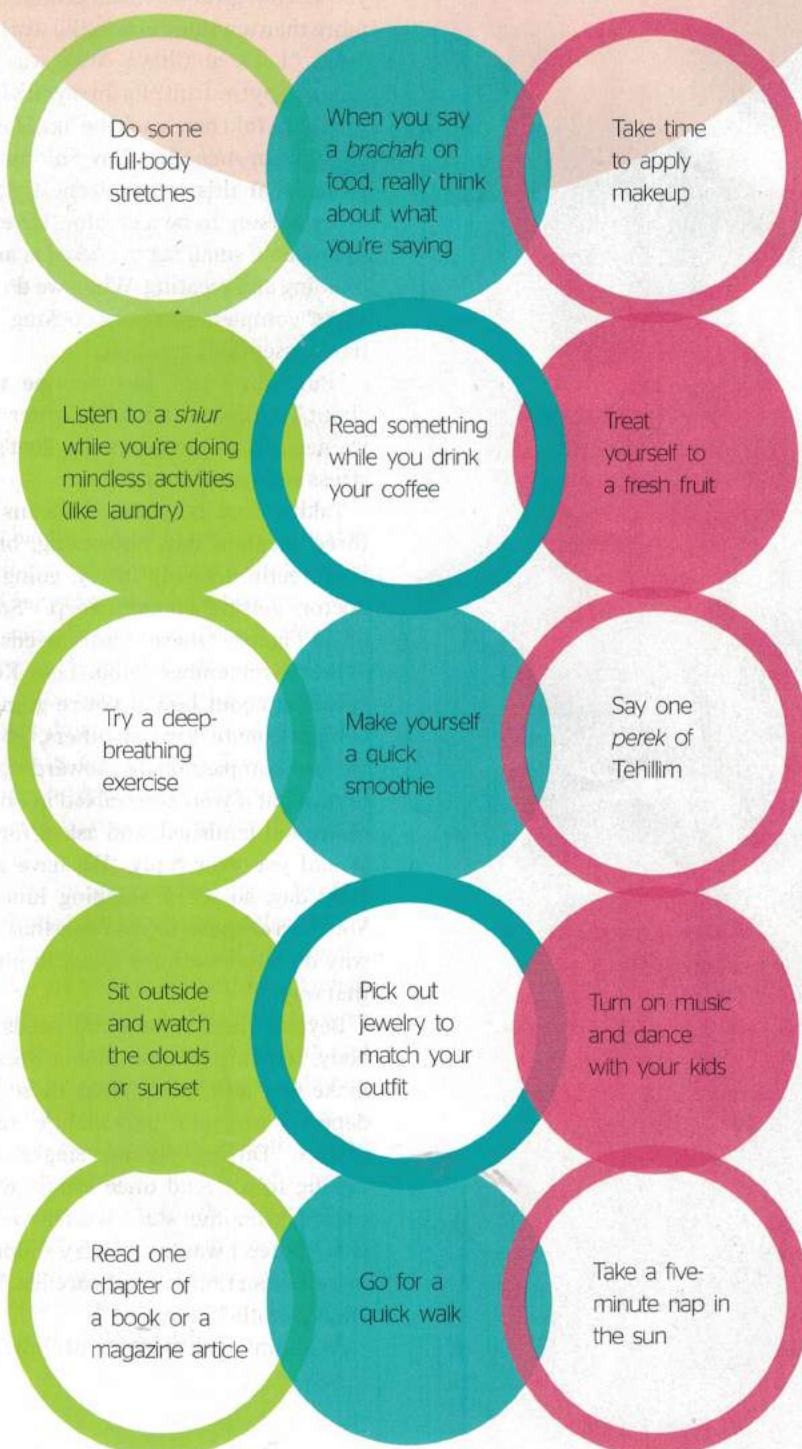
"Another man walks by and says, 'Why don't you take a break to sharpen your saw?' The first man replies, 'I don't have time to sharpen my saw!' And he keeps on sawing. 'Do you realize that if you sharpen your saw, you won't lose time,' the second man says, 'you'll gain time because you'll cut down the tree faster and with less effort?'"

"We do the same thing all the time," Julie continues. "We think that if we keep going and going, we'll get more done. But if you were to make a calculation, you'd see how much time you lose by *not* taking care of yourself. And you don't always need a long block of time to "sharpen your saw." (For self-care activities you can do in five minutes or less, see sidebar.)

Self-Care

IN 5 MINUTES OR LESS

Some days — and some stages of life — are busier than others. Here are self-care activities that even the busiest women can manage:



"THERE'S A BASIC FORMULA IN MARRIAGE THAT WHEN OUR SELF-CARE GOES DOWN, OUR TOLERANCE FOR OUR HUSBANDS ALSO PLUMMETS"

"When things are especially hectic for my ladies, they ask me for a 'free pass' — to do just one self-care instead of three. But during trying times, you need to *increase* your self-care," stresses Julie. "I remember visiting a mother of 11 who was sitting shivah for her eldest daughter. This girl was amazing, always there for everyone, and suddenly she was diagnosed with cancer. Her mother became a full-time nurse — she stopped taking her daily walks, she stopped returning phone calls. The daughter would get better, then worse, then better, then worse. The mother wasn't coping.

"She told us at the shivah that she went to a *gadol* and he said, 'Kids can't come home to a mother who's always run down and sad. They need a mother who has *simchah*. You need to take care of yourself. Whether or not your daughter survives is up to Hashem. But whether or not the rest of your kids survive is up to you.'

After Esther gave birth to her twins, she also asked Julie for a "free pass." "At 34 weeks, one of my babies stopped growing, so I had to be induced," Esther says. "One girl was born healthy; the other had a heart defect, which was fixed with surgery at six months, and she also had Down's. It was overwhelming. Both girls were in the NICU. I was pumping nonstop. I'd rush home to see the older kids, then race back to the hospital to deliver my milk. Eventually, my healthy baby came home, but then I was torn between her and my baby still in the NICU. I told Julie I had no time for self-care. But she quickly corrected me: The busier you are, the more self-care you need. It's an equation — the more you need to give, the more emotional fuel you need."

THE SELFISHNESS STIGMA

"A lot of women feel uncomfortable putting themselves first," says Julie. "But you're only putting yourself first so you can be a better giver." Even if you intellectually understand this, there may still be an emotional hurdle, in part because self-care has a stigma in certain circles.

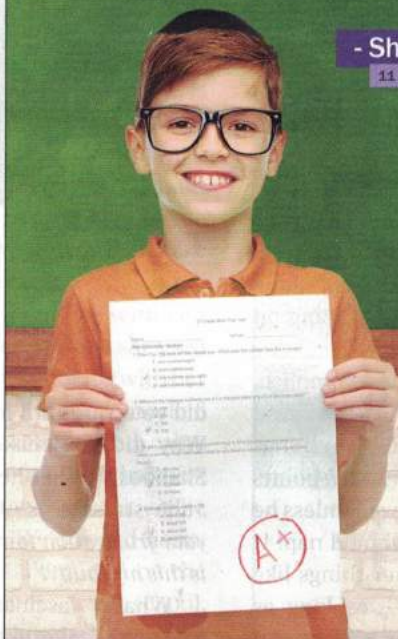
"I so often hear women say that if they take the time to buy themselves something or get a manicure, they feel like they're being takers instead of givers, that they're not selfless or committed like the women who give and give without stop.

"First of all," Julie points out, "that *tzadeikes* on your block might be doing all sorts of self-care activities that you simply don't see. Secondly, women who give to everyone except themselves end up exhausted and run-down. When you don't take care of yourself,

"School was so difficult,
I failed every test.
Now I understand the teacher
and just received my first A+!"

- Shloimy

11 years old



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you can only be a short-term giver. It's the women who take care of themselves who can truly give and give because they feel happier and fuller."

There is, however, a distinction between self-care and self-indulgence. How to tell the difference? One way is to assess how you feel afterward — for instance, did shopping online fill you or drain you? If something is true self-care, you'll feel full and ready to give. "That's why," Julie notes, "I never let anyone put 'going on Facebook' on their self-care list."

What we're really trying to accomplish, says Julie, is to better serve Hashem. And to achieve that goal, we need to do things for ourselves. "The *Shulchan Aruch* points out that if a man can't learn well unless he takes an afternoon nap, he should nap! It also says this regarding other things like eating, drinking, walking — as long as he has the *kavanah* that this is so he can better serve Hashem. And being a happy wife and mother *is* our *avodas Hashem*."

A WIFE AND HER VIOLIN

Does this situation sound familiar? You've had a long, exhausting day — you woke up at six, shuttled your kids off to school, threw in a few loads, visited your elderly aunt, made two cakes for Shabbos, picked up the kids, helped with homework, dealt with tantrums, and made dinner from scratch. Your husband finally walks in the door and before he drops his briefcase, you've started in on your monologue: how you were so busy that you didn't even eat until four p.m., how you've been on your feet all day cooking and helping others, and you go on and on complaining.

"You'll notice that when your friends hear about your *chesed* accomplishments, they exclaim, 'You're unbelievable!' " notes Julie. "But husbands don't. They're not impressed when their wives are martyrs since they know firsthand what it's costing them."

In the above scenario, the husband is likely thinking or saying, "So why didn't you take a nap if you were up at six? Why

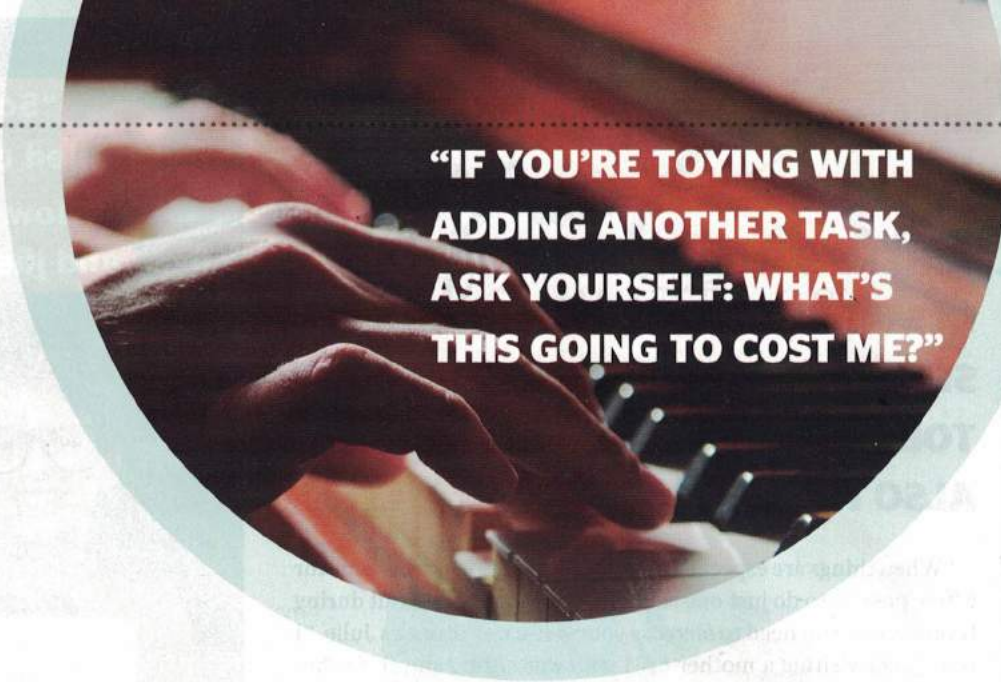
did you wait until four to eat something? Why did you make so many cakes for Shabbos?" What he's really trying to say, Julie stresses, is *Why are you directing your frustration toward me? Why and how is this my fault?*

"What's fascinating is that when we don't take care of ourselves, we subconsciously hand that responsibility over to our husbands — as if they should be the ones to ensure we're rested and rejuvenated and happy. We forget the fact that we are responsible for our own self-care," says Julie.

If we're failing to take care of ourselves, it can be especially infuriating to watch our husband put his needs first. "One woman actually complained to me that her husband always uses the bathroom as soon as he comes home instead of diving right into father/husband mode. That she viewed this basic need as a 'luxury' revealed how much she was neglecting her own basic needs," says Julie.

When we're run down, we naturally complain more and are less pleasant to be around. Julie remembers one client, we'll call her Dina, who had a long list of complaints about her husband — he wasn't home enough, she had to nag him to get things done, he was always checking his phone.

"What hurt Dina the most is that when she and her husband were actually talking, he was distracted and didn't seem interested in what she was sharing," says



**"IF YOU'RE TOYING WITH
ADDING ANOTHER TASK,
ASK YOURSELF: WHAT'S
THIS GOING TO COST ME?"**

Julie. "We started by working on her self-care list, but Dina couldn't muster up anything beyond 'a cup of coffee.' After a lot of 'ummmm' and 'I don't know,' Dina said, 'You know, I miss playing the violin.'"

"Turns out that Dina was an amazing violinist but had stopped playing when life got busy," continues Julie. "She contacted a musical friend of hers to get together to play duets. Just a few weeks of consistent playing made a huge difference in her happiness. As she was walking out the door on her scheduled night, violin in hand, Dina turned to her husband and said with a sweet smile, 'See you in a bit.' He was totally taken aback by her lightness, her mood. 'Oh,' he replied. 'When will you be back?' She couldn't believe the warmth in his voice. This was such a game-changer in the marriage because she could tell that suddenly he *wanted* to be home with his wife."

Self-care is inviting. "When women take care of themselves, it makes husbands think, *I want to be around her*," says Julie. "Imagine if instead of being wiped out when your husband came home, things were calm, the table was set. What if instead of a complaint on your lips, you were humming while you served dinner?"

EREV CARE

When it's a relatively calm Tuesday, self-care is doable. But what about on Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov, when you have more to accomplish in less time? And what

about on Shabbos or Yom Tov itself, when all the kids are home and there's even less time for yourself?

It all starts with planning ahead. On Thursday, you should already know what three self-care activities you'll do on Friday — and when exactly you're going to fit them into your schedule.

Another crucial element is letting go of perfectionism, Julie says. What's going to happen if you don't make that gourmet cake? Or that third kugel? On the other hand, what's going to happen if your kids don't eat all day because you haven't prepared an Erev Shabbos meal for them? When you're making your to-do list, review everything carefully to weed out the non-necessities. And if you're toying with adding another task, ask yourself: What's this going to cost me?

It also helps to clarify what's *urgent* versus what's *important*. Things like creating a happy Shabbos atmosphere, *shalom bayis*, building good relationships with your kids, and *simchas hachaim* fall in the category of important. Urgent is the bus leaves at 8:05 or the pressured feeling of, "I *must* make a second dip."

"How much of your Erev revolves around urgent versus important?" Julie asks. "We often get so distracted by urgent that important falls by the wayside. When we were single and davening to get married and start a home, what were we davening and hoping for? When we light our candles, we daven that our children should love *Yiddishkeit* and Shabbos. But how can they if they've just endured another stressful Erev Shabbos and their mother is so exhausted that, instead of being emotionally available, she's nodding off into the soup?"

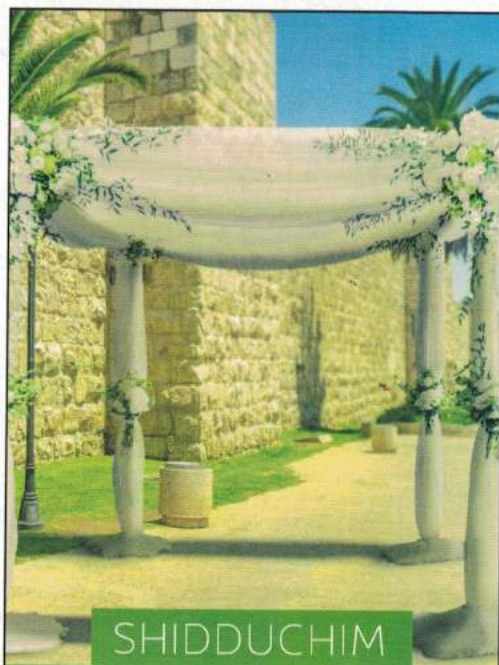
Three-day Yamim Tovim — and the entire month before Pesach — are tough, "but you don't have to be a victim," says Julie. "You are in charge of your own self-care. Instead of saying, 'I hate three-day Yom Tovs,' which your kids hear, ask yourself: What will I need to

feel full and rejuvenated during this time? Be proactive and make it happen. If you need a nap, ask your husband — nicely — for help, or hire a high school girl to take your kids to the park. If reading is a self-care activity, buy yourself a book. When you're grocery shopping, pick out a 'Mommy treat.' Think about which games you're going to set out for the kids so you can *daven*. Consciously plan ahead to make sure your needs will be met."

Julie shares a memory of her seminary days in Har Nof, Jerusalem, when she used to spend Friday mornings cooking with her *rebbetzin*. "At nine a.m., when I knocked on her door, she was relaxed and calm. She'd already davened out on the balcony, and enjoyed her coffee with a cookie. She was ready to greet me. We'd spend hours together cooking and talking and by the time her kids came home from school, she'd have an Erev Shabbos meal prepared for them — boiled eggs, yogurts, salads, tuna. As the children walked through the door, she'd make eye contact with each one of them, caress their cheeks, and greet them warmly."

Julie was single at the time and didn't appreciate what a feat this was until she had a family of her own. "I remember when one of my kids came home Erev Shabbos and said, 'I'm hungry' and I was thinking to myself, *Me too!* I had so little patience for my kids because all I wanted was to finish my to-do list. By the time Shabbos came, I was depleted." That's when Julie remembered her Erev Shabbos mornings in Israel.

"The next Friday," she continues, "I did things differently. I enjoyed my cup of coffee. Instead of driving my kids to a play group that's five minutes away, I walked them. I ate breakfast and lunch. I planned ahead so I could finish my Shabbos prep early, and decided that we could all live without that extra side dish." When her kids came home that afternoon, she had a whole table ready — rice cakes, tuna, chopped-up veggies. "I was," says Julie, "the mother I wanted to be." ☺



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DEAR READERS

offtopic

Sewing machines became available to the public in the 1860s, and cut down sewing time from approximately 14.5 hours to 1 hour.



Monday morning, 11:15.

I was editing Sarah Glazer's superb feature on self-care, nodding along with every line. "When we don't take care of ourselves, we're more prone to a profusion of problems, including exhaustion, stress, sickness, insecurity, weepiness, and burnout." Nod, nod, nod. I tweaked a sentence, replaced a word, kept reading.

"But here's the part no one tells us about," Julie continues. "In order to give, we need to fill ourselves up. That's why I stress self-care so much."

I was hungry. All I'd eaten was a pear. My brain was craving caffeine, my stomach demanded food. But I refused to be distracted; no breaks until I finished this edit.

"What if your son walked in on Friday afternoon famished, and asked for lunch. Would you ever reply, 'We have a really busy day, so we're skipping lunch.' No! You'd *never* speak to your son that way. So why do we sometimes speak to ourselves that way?"

I laughed aloud. Here I was, editing an article on self-care, while depriving my body of the energy it needed. I clicked save and went to the kitchen. I made myself a steaming mug of coffee the way I liked it — all milk — even though it did take another three minutes. I took a carrot muffin to go with it. I brought my snack to the computer, and sipped and munched happily as I continued to edit. (Yes, I probably should have enjoyed them at the kitchen table while looking out the window or reading something, but I'm not holding there just yet.) Once I was no longer dealing with hunger and fatigue, the work went more quickly and smoothly.

To understand how critical self-care is, to learn the forms it can take, and to discover how to find the time we don't think we have, read Sarah's article. I'd like to just add one point I've learned from experience

We often feel like we have to "earn" our little treats. We can't do a self-care activity until we "deserve" it. Unfortunately, we also often set ridiculous standards for ourselves. *Of course you can take a little walk, we tell our drained self. As soon as the living room is clean, the dishes washed, the stove scrubbed — oh, and you should probably lay out the kids' clothing for tomorrow if you don't want another miserable morning.* Two hours later, we're far too tired to muster up the energy to go for a walk. Instead, we go to bed feeling resentful. And two weeks later, when we finally go for the walk, it's too little too late.

After Yom Tov, we may desperately need to recharge our batteries. But no, we don't take off an afternoon to spend with our husband or friends. Because, didn't you see that overflowing hamper? And what about all the backlogged work from before Yom Tov? How could you even think of taking half a day off? Two months later, surprise, surprise, we're feeling like we're coming apart at the seams. At that point, a few hours isn't enough, we feel like we need a few days.

Yes, there's a particular form of pleasure that comes from enjoying our little whatever-it-is-that-relaxes-us when the children are slumbering, the house pristine, and our work completed. But since that moment is far too elusive, it may be wise to view self-care not as the reward we get at the finish line, but as the fuel our engines need all through our daily marathon.

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