

# Taking time for self-care

With more demanding roles, the importance of taking time for balance is paramount

by maddie mccarron • illustration by metro creative

**T**aking care of the people around them is almost every woman's first priority.

This "second shift" tends to lean toward women in many homes all over the world.

Women often are the household workers. They are the main caretaker for children, the planners and the cleaners.

All of these tasks can lead not only to exhaustion, but also mental and physical stress.

"There's a lot of resilience involved in being a woman," said Shelley Till, a program and leadership

development coordinator for Iowa Women Lead Change. "Especially as a mom, a working woman or a working mom, you're putting everyone else before you."

The key to alleviating any stress and exhaustion is to build time and space for themselves.

"It's imperative that at some stage, you take a really good look at yourself and how you are spending your time," said Julia Theisen, owner of Body & Soul Wellness Center and Spa in Dubuque. "What jobs can someone else do?"

According to experts, taking time for your self-care isn't selfish; it's necessary. Women feel the need to do it all, but they often forget about themselves in the process.

"The first sign of not taking time for yourself is resentment," Theisen said. "If you start to feel any sense of resentment about what you're doing, having to work extra or not having time to do something for yourself, that's a powerful indicator that something needs to change."

But it isn't uncommon for women to feel guilty for taking that time when they should be putting themselves on their list of priorities.

"Women are strong and resilient. We give birth for, goodness sake," Till said. "But if you don't take care of you, not only do you suffer, but everyone around you suffers. It's like what they tell you on an airplane. In case of an emergency, make sure you put your air mask on before helping someone else. It's the same perspective."

Till emphasized that to be a good mom, wife, daughter and working woman, you can't do all of those things by running on empty.

"When we are stressed and trying to do

everything and be everything, it's like driving a car with no gas and no oil. The car will eventually break down," she said.

One thing to also keep in mind is that there are young girls looking up to you.

"You're being the role model," Theisen said. "So, when you look at the young women around you, what do you want to model for them? What do you want to stand for? Because they're absorbing all of it."

Theisen looks to the book, "The Art of Extreme Self Care," by Cheryl Richardson, as a consensus of how to go about self-care.

"It's brilliant," Theisen said. "In the book she says 'the majority of people at a minimum need to take 30% off of their plate,' just to become more balanced in their life."

Taking time for you allows you to be more energetic, have better relationships and creates life-fulfilling results. But the changes to create that time for yourself don't have to be huge.

"Think of one area that you can make a difference," Theisen said. "It might be not

looking at social media after 6:30 p.m., going to bed at the same time every night or signing up for one of those fitness classes. Once you make a change in one area, it will have a domino effect to everything else."

Till shared the same idea. The underlying goal of taking time for yourself is so that you can create authenticity and connections with the people around you.

"Plan that time out for yourself. You can't assume you'll make or find the time because you won't," Till said. "What you do in the morning sets your path for the rest of your day, so get rid of your phone in the morning and instead meditate, do breathing exercises or read a book."

Once you find what motivates you, you're more than halfway there.

"Figure out what it is that energizes you and do it," Till said. "Because at the end of the day to be the best version of yourself you need to take care of yourself."

*Maddie McCarron writes for the Telegraph Herald.*