**Taking Care of Yourself**

*Before you can care for others, you must care for yourself.*

When you are in a difficult situation with your child, ask yourself some questions:

How am I feeling? Do I notice a rapid heart rate? Angry facial expressions? Tense muscles? Sadness or Despair?

What is my reaction to the child? Am I fed up? Am I telling myself that my child is doing this on purpose to make me mad?

How am I handling the situation? Am I withdrawing? Freezing up? Digging in my heels for a fight?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions try one or all of the following tech-niques to help you care for yourself. You will also be modeling behavior you want your child to learn.

**Use the Calm Down Steps.** Stop, Breathe, Count to Four, Give Yourself a Hug, Ask for Help. Ask your child to show you how!

**Take a timeout.** Make sure your child is safe then walk into another room. Ask someone else to deal with the situation.

**Smile.** A big smile (even if it is fake) stretches and relaxes your face.

**Stretch.** Touch your toes and then the sky. Clasp your hands and reach over your head and back. Press your palms together as hard as you can.

**Repeat a favorite saying to yourself.** “This too shall pass” or “I can do it”.

**Opposite Action.** Do something that is the opposite of what you feel like doing. Want to shout? Whisper instead. Want to spank your child? Instead, give her a big hug.

**Take care of yourself every day.** Get plenty of rest. Drink lots of water. Exercise and eat nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Avoid alcohol, sweets, and fatty foods.

**Remember that you are not alone.** Raising children is hard work and sometimes frustrating. Meet with other parents and family for support, fun, and adult conversation.