



guide to
self-care
for families together
at home



introduction

Hey there, I'm Jonas Ellison. I'm so happy that I could write this "Guide to Self-Care for Families Together at Home" in collaboration with my good friends at the SALT Project. In this time of pandemic and "sheltering" at home, taking care of ourselves and each other is more important than ever.



This little guide was designed to give you some tools to pick and choose from to foster self-care in your family during this challenging time. Peruse through it, use what speaks to you, and discard the rest. There's no certain order to this guide – so settle in and feel free to jump around. I've selected from my own mental Rolodex of family self-care ideas as well as ones I've borrowed from the cultures of my Scandinavian ancestral siblings (because it's true – they are the masters of self-care).

I hope you enjoy this little guide. In these uncertain times, as we stay home in the name of love and care for our neighbors, may these new challenges bring us closer together – with God and each other.

As Ever,
Jonas Ellison





medium sized ideas

good stuff to chew on;
some modest planning involved



fill up each other's buckets

There are two types of behaviors we can choose to exhibit: bucket-filling or bucket-dipping. Kindness is often contagious. All it takes is one act of kindness for more to be perpetuated. If someone does a kind act for you, then you are more likely to pay it forward to someone else.

Have the kids create actual buckets (or jars, or glasses) at home for the family. Then, make slips of paper available. When someone does an act of kindness for someone else, write it down and put it in their bucket. See how close you can get to having your bucket filled by a specific date you all agree upon. Make a family tradition every weekend or two where everyone gets to read from their buckets and feel the love.

dinner discussion: is this inside or outside of my control?



"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow..."
+ *Matthew 6:28*

So much of what we worry about is outside of our control. And so much of what's inside of our control goes unattended to.

The next time you gather around a meal, have an open discussion about what's bringing stress and worry to each of your lives. Grab some paper and a pen and start a "worry list" for each person. Beside each thing, decide whether it's inside or outside of your/their control. If it's outside your/their control, cross it off the worry list and give each other permission to let it go.

teach each other something

It's empowering to showcase, celebrate, and pass on our gifts. Plus, it increases our connection to each other. Everyone in the family grows when we do this.

Make a short list of your top gifts that you may be able to teach to the rest of the family. Then, schedule in afternoon workshops that the family can attend together hosted by the 'expert.'

if you need an excuse to eat more cake



"The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word."

+ *St. Augustine of Hippo*

Fika is the Swedish ritual of afternoon coffee/tea and cake. In my home, we don't do it enough, but when we do, it's a holy ritual. For Swedes, it borders on dogma in that many of them do it every day (how they stay so svelte is a mystery to me).

Get some nice coffee (tea, milk, or juice for the kiddos is fine) and bake a cake (from scratch is even better, but not required). Schedule it in and make it a ritual – slow and intentional.

No one should be running around when you're making, preparing, and serving it. Give it a blessing and make the coffee and cake sacramental (okay, it's not bread and wine, but it can still be sacred). And it must be done together – Fika in solitude is merely a coffee break.



know that kids
don't need 'epic'



Perfectionism is real, even (particularly) in parenting. But you don't have to be the world's best homeschooler, or the world's best "fun activity" director, to give your kids the support and structure they need. Most kids (especially those under the age of 10) are fine with a mere stroll around the block to chase fireflies or pick up rocks and sticks. If you live near a wooded area or a stream, you have a built-in wonderland that's easy to take for granted because we adults can get bored so easily.

In fact, from what I've found, the simpler the better. My daughter would much rather hang out in her little workshop area and make things out of cardboard and tape than do just about anything else. So enjoy the simple desires of your young ones while you can. They might actually prefer it that way.

parents: you can have friends too



"Then God said, "It is not good that the human being should be alone..."

+ Genesis 2:18

Being together at home is a great thing – a blessing, in fact! But just like anything, too much of anyone can be, well, too much! Friendship time with people outside the family isn't just important – it's essential.

Be intentional about it. Plan Skype or phone dates with your friends and acquaintances. Create some "away" time and enjoy yourself every now and then. Your family will thank you.



grandma had a point: go for 8 hours of sleep



"It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved."

+ Psalm 127

It's real. People are sleeping less and less, and this global pandemic isn't helping AT ALL! We need sleep now more than ever. Like, NEED it. During sleep, our health is restored, our minds are reset, and we wake up stronger and more able to face a new day.

leave room for blueness



"...a time to weep,
and a time to laugh..."

+ Ecclesiastes 3:4



We're human. Sometimes we get down in the dumps. We get blue – sometimes for a reason, but often for no reason at all.

Everyone wants family time to be loving and enjoyable. But we're all going through a super tough time. We have to **allow** each other space to be blue. Yes, care for each other. Keep an eye on your loved ones. But incessantly expecting perpetual positivity is a burden no soul can bear (this includes you, mom or dad).

Let yourself have a good cry, eat too much ice cream, and share your raw truth to a trusted friend or a blank journal page. Just make sure you commit to coming out on the other side restored.

