

# CARING FOR YOURSELF SO THAT YOU CAN BETTER SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

TANYA HOSKEN - COUNSELLOR



Supporting your child through medical procedures, especially cannulations requires a lot from you as a parent. Not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. Making sure you are well supported before, during and after potentially stressful or upsetting procedures/appointments is important.

## TO TEND TO THE NEEDS OF YOUR CHILDREN, YOU MUST FIRST TEND TO YOUR OWN.

Children (especially young children) will tune into their parent's emotional state to determine how they should feel, especially in unfamiliar or stressful situations. It is essential that you do what you can to feel as calm and confident as possible. It is easy to push your needs aside as a parent, however little things can make a big difference.

## TAKING CARE OF YOUR BASIC NEEDS

This may seem like an obvious suggestion, but all too often parents put their needs to the bottom of the list. Make sure you have an adequate meal before visiting the hospital. Take a healthy snack and a water bottle to ensure that you can continue to tend to your own needs regardless of the needs of your child.

Where possible get a good night sleep the night before - Sometimes easier said than done when you parent young children. Your capacity to meet your child's needs will be far greater if you are feeling well rested and have enough energy for the day.

Be present. It is hard to respond in a calm and caring way when we are stressed, distracted or distant. Juggling all the different tasks life, your family, and your work may demand of you can be exhausting. Trying to do everything and be everything to everyone can leave you feeling stretched in all directions. If possible press pause on these demands and set an intention that while in hospital you are just going to tend to your child's and your own immediate needs.

Technology is a great tool for distraction and to pass the time. However, your relationship with your child is the greatest and most impactful tool you have. Use technology to support you and your child, but not to replace the soothing and nurturing benefits of a present caring parent.

Seeing your child in pain or supporting them when they are distressed is physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting. Reading a book or practising mindful breathing can help you relax and take time out from being 'on'. Knitting, talking with a friend or resting your eyes for a moment are other ways to take an energising break. Take a moment to list two things that you could do while bed side that would nourish you either physically, emotionally or mentally.



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## IF YOU NOTICE YOU ARE FEELING STRESSED OR ANXIOUS, TAKE A MOMENT TO RELEASE SOME OF THAT BUILDING PRESSURE.

Blowing raspberries with your lips, yawning, sighing loudly, tensing and relaxing your shoulders, humming or sing to yourself are simple ways you can release built up stress from your body, and can be done almost anywhere, at any time. Better still, do them with your child and teach them skills to use when the stressful event is over and they need to release un-needed energy from the body.

## PLAN YOUR DAY

Knowing how demanding cannulation can be for you and or your child, make appropriate plans to follow your appointment. This could be performing easy tasks at work or at home. Asking another family member to prepare the evening meal or reheating a prepared dinner can make the evening easier. Learning to take care of yourself moment to moment will be role model important skills your child will need in learning to thrive.

Above all be gentle on yourself and your child. It can be helpful to remember that everyone, nurses included, are doing their best at any given moment. Having a 'work with' attitude can really help foster a collaborative approach to supporting your child through the cannulation process.

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

If you would like information or support around self care, stress and or anxiety in the lead up to or during the cannulation process please contact Tanya Hosken [counsellor@thalnsw.org.au](mailto:counsellor@thalnsw.org.au) or 0413092060. This service is free and confidential to patients and their families.

