

Balancing the many roles of modern motherhood

Being a mother is complex, and many parts of yourself are involved. When raising a child with additional needs, some of those parts might need to take precedence more often than others. We often hear about mothers developing parts of themselves that they may not have predicted, prior to becoming a mother. Examples include: the shy mother who has become an expert communicator and advocate for her child; the free-spirited mother who has adapted to a rigorous medical regime to support her child; and the highly organised mother who learns to manage multiple daily disruptions to accommodate her child's anxiety and aversions. Mothers really are champions.



Sometimes it can be difficult to find balance, drawing on all the different parts of yourself to meet the responsibilities needed in your own life, to support your family, to care for your child and to participate in your community. Many mothers seek balance everyday.

Some of the parts of being a mother you might notice:

- Being an advocate for your child and family - being a cheerleader, protector and defender
- Being an organiser - planning for appointments, household management, social events and daily life
- Being a nurturer - getting to be your child's parent, and nothing else. Getting to spend time loving your child for who they are.
- Being a learner - gather all the knowledge and resources you can to become an expert in your child's health
- Being a teacher - participating in your child's learning and development needs
- Being a worrier - trying to prepare for the future while drawing on past experiences. Wondering how everything will be managed in the future
- Being a risk manager - trying to anticipate things that can go wrong in many areas, and planning for how to manage them when possible
- Being a fun person - having fun with your children and family, having fun with your friends or partner, getting to do things you enjoy, sometimes pretending that things are better than they are

Many of these parts of yourself require daily maintenance, and it can be difficult to find headspace and time to be fun, and to participate in a parent-child relationship without goals or expectations - just being together and enjoying it.

With planning and resources, you may be able to prepare to go out into the community with your child ahead of time, allowing for opportunities to nurture some of these parts of yourself, allowing yourself to enjoy the moment. These parts and skills never really leave you, so if needed you can jump back into advocating, planning or worrying.

Use these templates to prepare for the many parts of being a mother, allowing more time for fun, participation and enjoying your child. Here is an example, and another blank template you can use for yourself when planning to go out.

Example:

Advocate	Organiser	Learner	Teacher	Worrier	Risk Manager
What can help me?					
Useful websites ie council, venue, transport	Support I need to arrange beforehand - friends, family, support worker, school	Things I need to know about managing my child's health for the environment and time we are out	Preparing my child for the event- social stories, photos, practice	Setting timers/ alarms to remind of medication, leaving time, time to breathe	Predicting risks and preventing or reducing adverse outcomes
Accessibility - parking, toilets	Planning for when we get home - dinner, winding down	Making time to reflect afterwards what went well and what could be different next time	Showing my family, friends beforehand how to help support us or my child while we are out.	Someone I can speak to or contact if I feel I'm not coping or need support	Optimising the family's participation and trying to reduce exclusion
My prepared statement about our family and/or my child's needs	Planning our schedule and transport	Taking a notebook or phone list when I get ideas while we are out - learning from the situation and others	Share teaching with others and delegate what i don't have to teach	Strategies in a notebook or on phone that I can use if I feel overwhelmed or triggered - breathing, affirmations	Managing finances, allocation of money, attending appointments and paperwork for entitlements
Notes for communicating if there is a misunderstanding	Things we must pack - medication, food, special toys, equipment	Asking advice and suggestions from professionals who know me, my child and our family well.	Pace myself	Recognise that it is okay to wonder about the future	Health and safety for the whole family, risks of injury, risks of getting sick
Who I can call now, or after to support me with advocating and our rights	Plan B options	Create headspace for myself to think	Give myself a pat on the back for being an awesome teacher	Limit my worry by reaching for hope and what none of us know about tomorrow	Risks to other members of the family and including siblings
Practising how to speak and monitoring myself when i am speak to remain assertive.	Time to reflect on what went well, what didn't and what I'll do next time	Get in touch with my own readiness to learn- am I tired? Am I emotional? Is now the right time?	Recognise multiple ways of teaching- i.e. verbal, showing, setting my child up.	Laugh because I can release the worry hormones and enjoy myself!	Risk of burnout - when can I get time out or plan breaks?

To fill out for myself:

Advocate	Organiser	Learner	Teacher	Worrier	Risk Manager
What can help me?					

