



Decide That You Are Number One

If you've ever traveled by air, you'll remember this rule from every flight you've ever been on: "If you're traveling with a child or dependent, and we lose air pressure, put your own oxygen mask on first!"

Well, just as in that situation, you will not be able to take care of someone else if you yourself are not okay! Think about it for a moment: if you don't take care of yourself now, who will be around to care for your parents — or anyone else in your life?

YOU have to be first on your priority list. When a demanding situation arises you need to ask yourself: "What decision will meet my parents' needs without sacrificing my greater good?"

Caregivers who collapse from exhaustion or stress always say, "I'll be fine, really!"...right before they become incapacitated with a serious health issue. And if it's not a physical health crisis, it can be the more subtle but equally debilitating emotional strain that knocks a caregiver out of the game. So, don't ignore yourself – it's a losing proposition!

Today, nurture and care for yourself with the love, respect and compassion that you need and deserve.

I CHOOSE to feel happy within myself. I no longer wait for an event to occur to make me happy.

Take a moment to write down your answers the questions provided.

1. List the top 5 people you care for. (Where do you show up on this list? Do you show up on this list?)

2. List the ways in which someone else's demands or needs seem to obligate you to ignore your own needs for 'oxygen'.

3. Create a list of activities, hobbies, interests, needs that provide you with "oxygen" (joy, relaxation, ease, care, etc.) This is for YOU to begin to care for yourself. Remember this is YOUR oxygen so you can care for others with compassion.

4. Feeling guilty? Reread lesson 2 and take a deep breath to remind yourself that self-care is NOT selfishness, it's Self-Preservation. It's a necessity.
