

When You Don't Want to Be Here

I have a confession to make this morning.

I wasn't very present with my family this weekend.

I wasn't feeling well and I really needed some down time. I'm learning that it is hard to be intentionally present when I am physically present 24/7.

We don't have a babysitter and we are a one-car family, so when my husband is at work we are confined to our property. This is OK and I'm content with our present situation—but it does make for very long days at times.

I went to bed last night with a lot of guilt, realizing that I had missed out on an opportunity to make the weekend fun for my kids.

And as I renewed the commitment I made in January to show up, I realized that there are five things I need to do to make sure that being present isn't just an activity in 2015, but a habit for the rest of my life.

1. Give yourself grace. Dear Mommy, there will be slip-ups in life. If we focus too much on our failures and not enough on our successes, we place a burden on our shoulders our family doesn't mean for us to carry. When you fail to be what your family needs you to be, ask forgiveness and plan for a successful next time. Turn your failure into a teachable moment.

2. Plan your down times. It's easy to let "down time" happen throughout the day, until we've frittered out time away and we realize that we weren't present for our family when they need us. That's what I did this weekend. I didn't have a good plan,

so very little was accomplished. This weekend I learned that I need to plan down times in my day and plan them well. I am able to keep going when I know that a bowl of popcorn and my favorite film is waiting for me when the kids go to bed.

3. Take advantage of moments when your children are playing and encourage independent play. Do you have work that usually waits for you when the kids go to bed, preventing you from having adequate down time? Plan times of independent play for your children and take advantage of those times to get the dishes done, the rug vacuumed and the house picked up so that when they go to bed at night, you can unwind. It makes it far easier to be present when you're well-rested.

4. Make intentional plans to be present. Something I learned from this weekend is that being present doesn't just happen. "Present" won't just show up on your doorstep and say, "Here I am! I'm moving in now." It's a habit that has to be built, and for that habit to be built a plan must be made. I will spend this week planning weekend activities with my children.

Another thing I've realized over the past couple of weeks is that my husband's swing and graveyard shifts are the hardest. When he is on swing shift, I am alone with the kids nearly the entire day. After an entire week that way, it becomes a little monotonous around here.

I am learning to save "tricks in my bag" to break up the monotony that is second shift. Graveyard shift is a character all his own. Because of our small house, the children and I must stay confined to the living room so that Daddy can sleep (something that is vital for him). By the end of the week we're all suffering from major cabin fever. This needs a special plan, so I will be working on special activities to do on the week's when he is graveyard—including some field trips, since the car is here.

5. Hold your plans loosely. Leave some room for spontaneity!

Maybe your children don't want to play with playdough right now, but would rather have some independent time with their trains or legos. That's okay! Switch gears and do something for YOU during this time.

Dear Mommy, do you know what I learned most from this weekend? Grace. I learned to give myself the grace that my kids give so freely. In case you think that this will give me license to check out whenever I don't feel like employing the discipline I so obviously need; I contend that grace isn't a "get out of jail free" card. Grace is forgiveness, and forgiveness walks hand-in-hand with accountability.

So next time I don't feel like being present, I'll come back and read this article to remind myself to invest in my down times so that I can show up for my family as the wife and mom they need me to be!

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live in the country with their two active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At *A Little R & R* she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at *Missional Call* where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.