

A photograph of two young children performing handstands on a light-colored leather sofa. The child on the left is wearing a bright green long-sleeved shirt and blue denim overalls, with their head resting on the floor and arms supporting their body. The child on the right is wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and blue denim overalls, also with their head on the floor and arms supporting their body. Both children are smiling broadly, showing their teeth. The background shows the cushions of the sofa and a portion of a green pillow.

# CREATE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

TIPS TO HAVE SOME TIME ALONE WHILE YOUR CHILDREN ARE SAFELY TAKEN CARE OF

Finding the time to get away for an evening, a weekend, or a special trip can be a challenge. One of the ways you can manage this is to engage your support network when you are ready for some time alone.

Here are a couple of tips on how you can make this the most effective.

## ▶ DON'T BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT THE TOPIC

You don't have to go into great detail and tell family, friends, or co-workers what you have planned. However, you can tell them you and your loved one just need some time to spend together as a couple.

*There's nothing intimate or embarrassing about asking people to help you spend some time together as a couple. Most people will be understanding and will readily help.*

## **OFFER AN EXCHANGE**

**If your family or friends are not particularly forthcoming with offers, you can also suggest an exchange. Offer to take your neighbors' kids to practice for a week or two in exchange for your children's overnight visit to their house while you take your partner away for a weekend.**

## **ASK YOUR SISTER/BROTHER OR FRIEND TO COME AND STAY WITH YOUR CHILD**

**while you go out for a romantic evening.**

## **TALK TO YOUR CO-WORKERS OR THE PEOPLE YOUR PARTNER WORKS WITH**

**and tell them you'd like to get some time away. Ask if they can get coverage or trade some workload to make this happen and then make the appropriate arrangements.**

## **IF ALL ELSE FAILS, ASK AROUND IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND GET REFERENCES FOR A GOOD SITTER**

**If you have to pay for it, do it. It's an investment, not a cost.**

*Get a reliable person to watch your kids while you have your time just for the two of you. If you have to pay for it, do it. Cut expenses somewhere else. It's a good and important investment!*

## ▶ ALLOW YOURSELF PLENTY OF TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT PERSON

Don't just leave care of your home, parent, or children to a stranger without **KNOWING** they are competent. Preferably, find someone that a friend or family member used so you know from their experience that the person is good.

## ▶ MAKE A LIST

Before you leave, make a list of what has to be done, and leave your contact phone numbers. But if you don't **HAVE** to leave your own numbers, so much the better. Perhaps your brother can't watch the kids but he can act as the emergency number for the person staying at your home if they have a frozen pipe or their car breaks down and they can't get the kids to soccer practice.

## THANK THEM

If you can get a friend or family member to take care of your children, house (and your dog) while you are away, be sure to thank them by giving them a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant, flowers, candy, or some other small gift to show your appreciation.

*They are more likely to say 'yes' the next time you want a favor if you remember to show appreciation!*

## LASTLY, JOIN (OR START) A BABYSITTING CO-OP

Babysitting co-ops are amazing and you will (almost) never pay for babysitting again. For example you can join a baby sitting co-op like <http://usitisit.com> which has an added benefit that you can only swap with friends you invite into your private circle; no strangers. This assures you that your children will be looked after by the best kind of sitter, another parent you know and trust.