



THE OXYGEN MASK ANALOGY

WHY SHOULD YOU PUT YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST?

If you have attended one of our Empowered Parenting Programmes, you will be familiar with the well-known aviation analogy, it's a concept that is at the very foundation of our teaching.

But what exactly does it mean, why is it so important and how does it apply to our families? Let's dive right into the analogy and discover why putting on your own oxygen mask before helping others is a game changer when it comes to family development.

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We've all heard the generic safety briefing that occurs shortly before take off that instructs us to put on our own mask before helping others. For parents, this analogy can feel preposterous. After all, we eat last, sleep last, relax last. Our hearts naturally tell us to help those that depend on us before ourselves but, our heads know that if we are unconscious we are not in a position to help others.

WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID TO PUT OURSELVES FIRST?

Simply put, we aren't programmed to put ourselves first and we aren't taught the coping mechanisms we require to handle being an over-scheduled parent at school. We also aren't brought up to recognise the signs that signal when our reserves are getting dangerously low. We wouldn't let our car or phone batteries get this low, so why don't we treat ourselves with the same level of care? What we are taught is that parenthood is a sacrifice and the reward is a happy and healthy child. But what if your child's development doesn't follow that worry-free trajectory? Parenthood in this instance can feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders with zero respite. There's a heap of guilt associated with looking after number one and we want to recognise that parenthood is a marathon not a sprint and we need to re-train our thinking especially when it comes to the guilt of prioritising ourselves.



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USING THIS ANALOGY IN A DAY TO DAY SETTING

Yes, this analogy typically comes into play in an emergency setting but you don't have to be in crisis to benefit from this advice. In fact, if you do wait until you or others are in crisis, you risk burn out as well as stress and fatigue. Giving all of your energy to others before tending to yourself can leave you feeling depleted, and if you feel depleted this in turn affects your ability to be the best care-giver you can be. Taking care of yourself allows you to find the energy you need to take care of your children. Doing an activity you enjoy can be as restorative as a nap. So put on your oxygen mask and put time aside to prioritise your own health and wellbeing, whether this is getting enough rest or doing something you love.

WHAT DOES PUTTING YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

So we understand the importance of filling up your cup so you have energy reserves to help others but how do you go about implementing it? The truth is, it will look different to each person, there is no one-fits-all solution when it comes to ensuring your cup is full. What we often say at Think Like a Pony is that self care isn't a face mask or a hot bath. Self care can be setting a boundary, setting aside time and space for you in your day or pursuing an activity that brings you joy. After all, as we teach you in our Empowered Parenting courses, boundaries are the foundations of respect. Some ideas could be:

- Check in with yourself daily. What emotions are you feeling? What is causing them?
- Access your pause button to stop, breathe and think whenever necessary
- Ask yourself 'is my oxygen mask secure?' before you dive head first into the needs of others



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WE'RE CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

We want to change the narrative that tells you that your needs come last and we want to highlight that putting yourself first can help you unearth strength you didn't know you had and ultimately be an integral cog in bringing families back together.

THINK LIKE A PONY FOUNDER, LYNN HENRY SAID:

"Putting your own oxygen mask on first is the only way to go. Because to empower someone else, you must first feel powerful yourself."

GET IN TOUCH

If you feel that you could benefit from our unique Empowered Parenting Programme, get in touch at familydevelopment@thinklikeapony.co.uk



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