

Raising Kids When Your Village is Far Away

I grew up with a large, close-knit extended family and now I live 2 hours away from them. To say my parenting experience would be completely different if we lived in the same town is an understatement. And raising kids without a village, or when your village is far away, brings its' own unique challenges.

Parenting with family in town can mean having a sitter on-call for girl's nights, school events that don't include younger siblings, even one-on-one time with your spouse and each child.

It can mean spending afternoons sitting around your mom or aunt's dining room table chatting while the kids play with cousins and all of the adults imagine if all of these kids (7 kids under 7) were theirs and wonder how on earth Nanny did it. No wonder she yelled and worried so much.

It can mean dropping the kids off somewhere without doing much coordinating and getting quiet time to yourself before you burn out as a parent.

Sadly, raising my kids when my village is far away means I don't get to experience this on a daily basis, but I have found ways to work little glimpses of time spent connecting with family and getting the support I need into our life.

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Here's how we manage to raise kids without a village:

Find Your People

The first step, is to find your people that you trust in your own town. Especially if you're new to the area, this will [help make a new town feel more like home](#). Stop feeling sorry for yourself that you don't have a village and make one. Find friends that have kids the same age as yours. If you're up for it- you can take turns watching each other's kids. Or split the cost of a babysitter and go on a double date. Even if you don't ever do that, having friends in the same stage of life as you is a key component in building your parenting support village when your family is far away. Even if you never use them, knowing you have a friend you can turn to in an emergency to drop off your kids takes away a lot of parental stress. Plus, life is more fun with friends.

How to Choose a Baby Sitter You Can Trust

Full disclosure, I haven't completely figured this out yet. BUT I do have friends who have, so a guest post from them is coming soon.

In the meantime, I think it boils down to being active in your community and asking "your people" for referrals. Maybe that means a teenager from your church. Or a college student that happens to be a co-worker of someone you know at their part-time job. Put the word out that you are looking and start budgeting for the expense. Some friends I know have also used the website www.care.com.

Or Ask Your Family to Come to You

When I had my second baby, this wasn't possible. My mom had neck fusion surgery and couldn't drive or ride in the car for long distances. I should have found a back up baby sitter, but I just wallowed in my own martyrdom and eventually burnt out. That's a story for another day. Now that I have a third baby and my mom is doing better, she can make the trip and it has been such a blessing.

She comes for a night or two to help with the kids when we have kid-free events to attend.

Get good at running errands with your kids

At first, I kept my errands to one trip per day so we could get back in time for naps and avoid meltdowns. But by the time my 3rd baby came along, I realized it was much easier to just get everything done in one trip. Sometimes this means buying the boys Coolattas at Dunkin' Donuts and enjoying them in the car while I nurse the baby before the next stop.

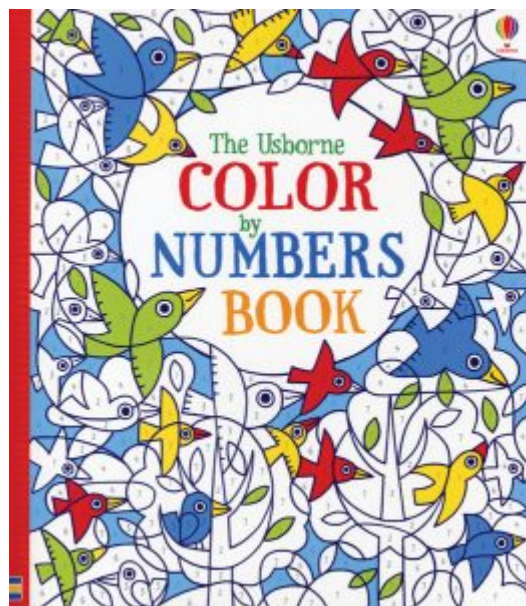
This method requires me to plan my trips strategically. For example, groceries come last so the milk isn't left sitting in a warm car for too long and I keep a few [grocery cooler bags](#) in the trunk just incase.

I also need to keep [books and activities](#) in the car for the boys, so they have something to do while they wait. We also make sure we have lots of snacks and drinks too. Like this [2 gallon drink cooler](#) full of water, especially in the summer. Or skip the errands and have your groceries delivered.

Involve Your Kids in Your Hobbies

When your alone time happens rarely, you have to get creative and learn to make time for your hobbies while you're with your

kids instead of saving them for a night out. For me, this means coloring with my 4 year old in the car while we wait in the drop-off line. Or [doing art projects together](#).



It means [getting active with my kids](#), instead of attempting to carve out time to hit the gym alone.

Or building quiet reading time into your day and pulling out your own book.

Make Time to Find Your Recipe for Happiness

Not taking time to know what makes you happy as a mom, leads to the dreaded Mom Funk and burnout. Trust me. Be proactive about prioritizing yourself. As I mentioned above, involving the kids in your hobbies is just one way to do more of what makes you happy. I know this is easier said than done. I'm totally guilty myself of putting everyone else's needs ahead of my own and feeling sorry for myself that I couldn't go out for a night.

Reading this book, [Happy You, Happy Family: Find Your Personal Recipe for Happiness in the Chaos of Parenting Life](#), really

helped me start to change my ways and incorporate “me time” into my daily routine. My friend Kelly, who blogs at The Reformed Idealist Mom wrote it and I can’t say enough good things about her scientifically based research and actionable tips. You can even start with a free chapter.

At the same time, another blogging friend, tackled this same topic. If you’re in a Mom Funk yourself, make sure you take her [7 Day Free Challenge to Banish the Mom Funk](#), or grab her [How to be a Happy Mom e-book](#).

Have Date Nights At Home

Date nights don’t have to involve hiring a sitter. Watch a movie together. Subscribe to a dinner service, give the kids Mac & Cheese, and then cook a meal together after the kids are in bed. Play a board game. If you think outside the box, there are plenty of ways to have fun together that don’t involve going to a restaurant or paying hundreds of dollars (once you factor in the babysitter) to see a movie in the theater.

Plan More Visits Home

My parents only live 2 hours away. So while it makes for a long day trip, weekend trips are pretty do-able. Instead of saving your visits for holidays, mix in a few weekend trips that you can use to spend individual time with each kid. I started doing this over the summer and hope to continue it.

I leave the baby and one child at my mom’s house while I take my other son for a “date”. The first time it was a simple trip to Barnes & Noble to pick out books. Then I went back to her house, fed the baby, and then took my other son miniature golfing. Everyone gets taken care of and the boys get the attention from me they desperately crave.

Foster a Strong Connection With Long-Distance Family

Have your kids [make cards and letters for family](#) or schedule regular video chats with long distance relatives. If it's important to you that your kids have a good relationship with out of town relatives then think creatively and come up with new ways they can connect with them, even miles away.

[Want to get started? Subscribe to my newsletter and I'll send you ideas. I have a "Building Strong Families" Challenge coming up soon. \(p.s. it's free!\)](#)

Yes, Send me your free tips!

Stop the Excuses and Make it happen

Back in my, I must do it all, parenting burnout days I had a lot of excuses. Excuses are easy, but they don't really move you forward in your life (or your business). When I started asking myself questions about my excuses, it helped me boil down which ones were in my control and which ones weren't. Which excuses were real challenges that required me to think of creative solutions and which were just me complaining or feeling sorry for myself. Which excuses were rooted in fear? Then I could tackle them accordingly.

It might be hard to be this honest with yourself, but trust me, doing it will make a big positive difference in your life.

Do you live far from family? I'd love to hear your own tips for making it work in the comments below.

