On Your Mind, July-August, 2020

**Baby/Back to School Themes**

**Jonathan C. Robinson, Ph.D.**

**Contributing Columnist**

Dear Dr. Robinson,

I’m a new mom. My husband and I married two years ago, while still in college. Boy, have our lives changed with little Jason’s arrival two months ago. Bill helps out as best he can, but it’s mostly on me. I feel like I’m spinning plates on sticks in the air. It’s never ending, and they are all crashing down around me. It’s all overwhelming. I’m letting the computer or television babysit little Jason, while I do clothes or dishes. I’m a wreck when Bill gets home from work, so I grouse at him even when he’s done nothing wrong. Help! Signed, Beside Myself

Dear Beside,

Breathe…breathe. Take a moment to hear me out. I don’t know any new mom who doesn’t have some version of your story. Even when new is good, it’s also different. Expanding your family is a blessing, but it takes some getting used to. If you are trying to be a perfect mom and a perfect wife, good luck with that. “Never good enough” is a mantle never worn well. Breathe. Don’t beat yourself up for doing the best you can under stressful circumstances.

Also, share and delegate. If you haven’t already, read to Bill your letter to me. He’s your husband, partner, life mate. He may be stressed in his own right, and that’s okay. If he’s not pitching in because he’s unaware of your feelings, that’s on you. Sit down and talk about division of labor. Not *home* and *work*. Your being a stay at home mom is a blessing, but also very much a job. What can you leave for Bill when he comes home in the evening? How can you share the load? He can have “daddy time” while you do chores, or he can help with the chores. Alternate putting Jason to bed, as that snuggle time is bonding at its best.

Finally, take time for yourself. At Jason’s age, he is still taking two naps a day. When Jason is down for his naps, you go down for yours as well. Even if you are not actually sleeping, take at least a 30 minute breather from your do list to re-energize. Guess what? You are worth it, and such pauses will relieve the crankiness, so that your time both with Jason, and with Bill when he gets home, will be more quality time. With time and effort, you won’t be so Beside Myself.

Dear Dr. Robinson,

So, what’s the deal? In early August, I’m all in on helping our kids get ready for the new school year. I’m looking forward to their return to school, giving me a break from 24/7 supervision and child care. Now, with the current pandemic, all of that is up in the air. Are the kids going back full-time to school in the fall? Is it safe for their return? How do I prepare them for the unknown? Signed, In The Dark

Dear In,

Wow! I wish I had answers to your questions. We are all in the dark about where this coronavirus is going and how soon it will be gone. However possible, be open and honest with your kids. If you don’t know, say so, and direct them to reliable sources. Stay up with your school district’s plans for re-opening, as the plans are different everywhere. Drill into your kids the safe habits of hand-washing, masking, and social distancing. Active listen their grumbles, but reinforce their safety. We all will return to normal, whatever that is. We just don’t know when, or how that will look.