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lifestyle & family

EDUCATION / PARENTING / SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

Ask Ariel: End-of-Summer Happy Dance



Dear Ariel,

First, I want to say I love my kids. They are funny, smart and most of the time I absolutely adore them. But I am so happy they are going back to school. It's been a long summer of too much family time and I am ready for a break. The problem is that I feel guilty for wanting them to be in school all day. I know their childhoods are so short and will be over soon and I should enjoy every moment. But I am really looking forward to a few quiet, calm hours each day. Do you have any brilliant suggestions to assuage my guilt?

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Dear SHD,

I love this question. Not feeling guilty about having a life apart from your kids, because no parent should feel guilty about finishing a cup of coffee or going to the bathroom without interruption—or just being able to sit quietly for a few minutes and breathe. What I love about this question is the layer underneath the guilt. That is, “Do we as parents have the right to have our own lives?” And the answer is a resounding “Yes!”—even though we are often given the message that it’s not okay to take care of ourselves or put our needs before the needs of our kids.

We are better parents when our lives are fulfilling, when we have interests and passions outside of our family. When I make time to exercise regularly, see my friends occasionally and spend alone time with my partner, I am a better, happier mom to my kid. It’s a simple equation that many of us fail to understand. Modern parenting has become a kid-centered circus. I know this might be a controversial statement, but our kids should orbit around our lives, not the other way around.

As for the kids going back to school, it’s often a great thing for families to return to the routine and structure of the school schedule. The comfort and predictability of the familiar will help ease some of the strain of too much family togetherness. Back-to-school time is a double-edged sword for those of us who are both public school educators and parents. I am sure ready for my kid to be back at his school, but it also means that I have to go back to mine. As much as I love my job, I love summer just a bit more. Try to be present with it all: the happiness of school starting, the love of your kids and their short childhoods—and savor those quiet moments whenever you can.

0 SHARES

Ariel Frager

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