

Be your own best friend

“I’m hopeless!” Karen exclaimed. “The house is a mess, the kids are out of control and I’m always making mistakes at work. I feel exhausted and burned out, and there just never seems to be enough hours in the day to get everything done!”

What would you say to Karen if she was your best friend?

You might point out that Karen does an amazing job juggling the roles of mother, partner, friend, daughter, employee, housekeeper and more. Maybe you would suggest that she take a break from worrying about everyone else for a change and do something that makes her happy. If this sounds familiar then congratulations, you are a good and wise friend. The challenge now is to apply these same concepts of kindness and acceptance when *you* start to become too self-critical.

Psychologist Dr Mandy Deeks from the Jean Hailes Foundation for Women’s Health believes many women can relate to feeling overwhelmed and inadequate. According to Dr Deeks, “Women are much better at criticizing, rather than congratulating themselves. Sometimes it can be very helpful to take a step back, recognise our achievements, big or small, and pat ourselves on the back.” Dr Deeks believes too many women have unrealistic expectations of themselves. “It’s important for women to realise that putting yourself first is not selfish, because taking time out to relax and rejuvenate is essential for overall health and wellbeing. It actually helps give you the energy to be there for everyone else.”

How to be your own best friend:

- When someone gives you a compliment, try to say thank you rather than protesting or putting yourself down.
- Try to set realistic goals and take pride in achieving them, no matter how small.
- Make time for yourself; even 10 minute blocks scattered throughout the day can be helpful.
- Prioritise. Try not to take on more than you can handle and remember it is ok to say no.
- Think about what you might say to a friend if she/he was in the same situation and then take that advice yourself!

For more information on emotional health and wellbeing, contact The Jean Hailes Foundation for Women’s Health on 1800 151 441 or visit www.healthforwomen.org.au/content/view/13/43/.