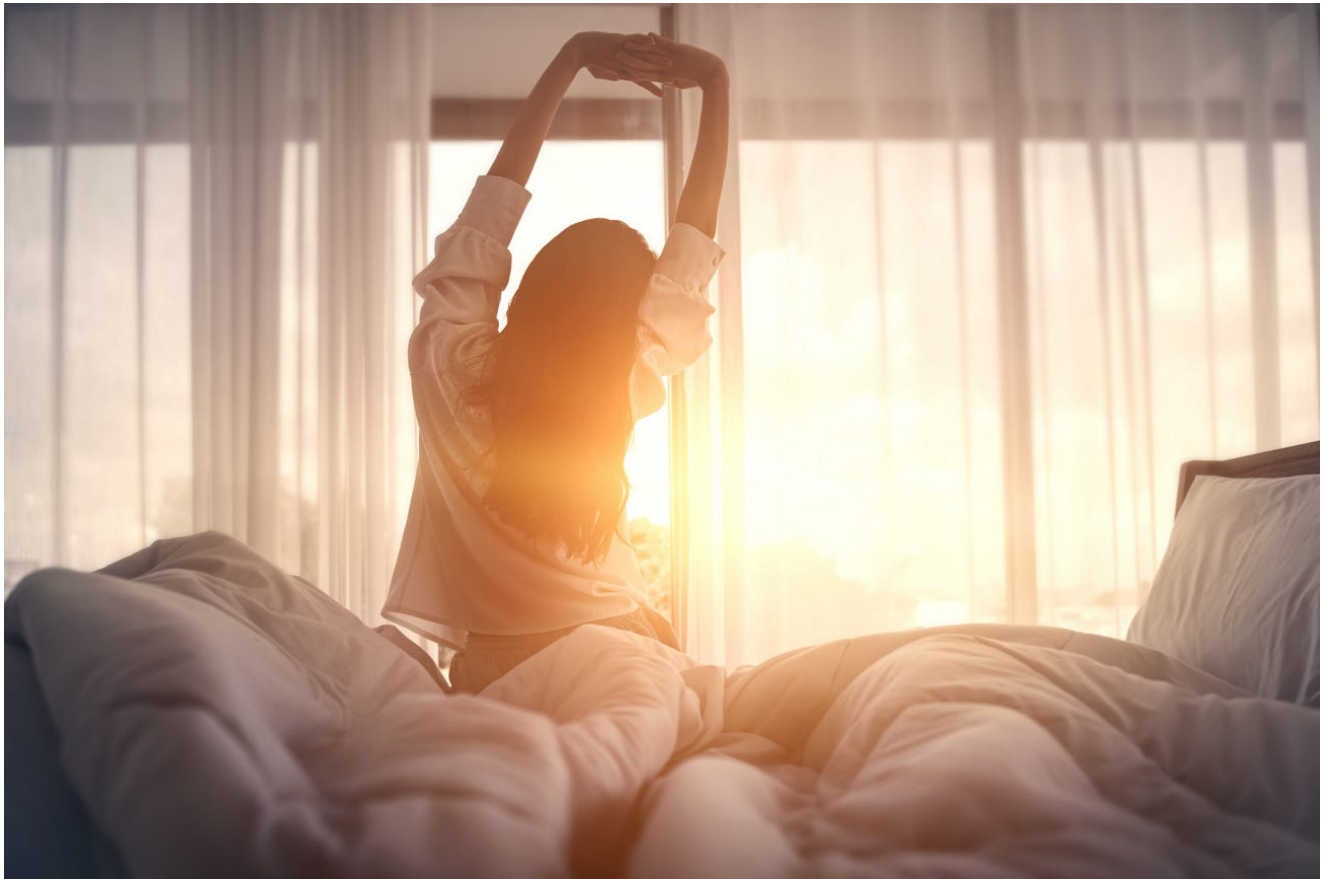


I Sent My Kids to Day Care and Took the Week Off to Recharge

BI businessinsider.com/sent-kids-day-care-took-time-off-to-recharge-2024-10

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- I had three kids very close in age while I worked full time.
- Our day care fee was the same whether we sent them or whether we took vacation.
- My office was closed for a week, but their day care was open, I chose to send them and relax.

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My daughter was not quite 4 when her second brother was born. [Having three kids](#) so close in age was challenging in those early years, but since I wasn't much of a "baby person" and wanted to have at least three kids, the best plan seemed to be to have them close together. To get the diaper days over with, some would say.

My husband and I worked full-time, and our kids went to day care as soon as my maternity leave was up after 12 weeks. Our day care facility charged a monthly fee that stayed the same every month, even if we chose to keep the kids out of day care for family vacations or other activities.

We would fly to California every December to spend time with my family. This week was always fun: getting together with my siblings at our parents' house to enjoy the holiday festivities. But it was also exhausting, beginning with the four-hour flight with three kids, one of which was a beefy lap child. Holding him was like wrestling a 30-pound carp for four hours — not particularly fun. After a week of sleeping in unfamiliar beds and making sure my kids didn't destroy my parents' house, we were ready to head home and get back to our routine.

When we returned home, I still had another week of vacation. My office was closed the last week of the year, which meant I had a quandary: Do I take my kids out of day care, or do I send them, since I have to pay for the week anyway?

I chose to send them to day care, and it was just what I needed to recharge.

Sending my kids to day care while I was off work was good for all of us

Having the week off of work while my kids went to day care let me rest and recharge after the travel days. I spent my days shopping Target's sales and catching up with friends. I watched my favorite TV shows and picked up fast food that I didn't have to share with anyone.

Did I feel a tiny bit guilty? Yes. Was it worth it? Definitely yes.

I always justified it in my head that it benefited my kids because they got back into their routine and saw their friends when they returned to day care. But really, it was a great way for me to acknowledge that being a mom is exhausting, and I deserved some time of my own.

My kids are older, and I still take time for myself

I now have three teenagers, and my world differs significantly from those toddler-filled days. There are no day care dropoffs, but instead, rides to the thrift store or pickups of boba or frozen yogurt for after-school treats.

I still make time for myself away from my kids, and I feel like it makes me a better mom. I take trips with friends where I'll be away from home for a weekend or longer. I agree to work trips where I might miss back-to-school nights or the annual school carnival.

These opportunities help me to build my career and maintain my friendships, and they help my kids learn life skills while I am away.

I am lucky that my husband is a very involved partner, but he has a job that doesn't always allow him to be home for dinnertime. My teens all have a few recipes they can make on their own, so they don't have to wait for Dad to get home for them to eat. I write up a schedule of who is in charge of the dishes and cleaning the kitchen while I am away (as the oldest complained that her brothers were leaving it all for her). But really, they do so well while I am away.

Taking time for myself shows my kids that I am a person outside of being a mother. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, after all.