



## EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH

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# Taking Care of Me

## *Why it's Essential that You Put Yourself First!*

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If you're reading my articles for the first time I can understand how the title of this one could imply that I'm advocating a selfish attitude and a lack of caring for others. On the other hand, anyone who knows me would tell you that this couldn't be further from the truth. I couldn't imagine going through life without helping others. In my professional life I'm fortunate enough to be able to use my hands and brain to get sick people healthy and keep healthy people healthy. The effort I put into educating the public about health goes well beyond my patients and well beyond most other health professionals as I truly believe the word doctor means teacher. My personal life includes the all-important job of being there for my three children and serving as the best role model I can be. If I'm not there for them then who will be? Add a wife, siblings, friends, and helping to care for elderly parents. Finally, I consider the charity work I do to be a privilege rather than an obligation. And yet, as much as I care for others, if I didn't take care of myself, a lot of that care would not be possible.

### **Which one are you?**

Are you the stereotypical mother who's had it engrained in her that it's her job to take care of everyone else first? Are you the not as stereotypical father who acts the same way? Or are you the friend who can never say no to others? If you're doing any of the above, I'm here to tell you that not only should you change your ways, you **must** change your ways.

### **Don't I need to help others?**

Of course you need to help others. As I said before, I couldn't imagine going through life without doing so nor could I imagine a world where everyone just cared for themselves. That's not what I'm advocating. Caring for and helping others is not only the right thing to do from a moral point of view, but it may also be necessary for your happiness, sense of fulfillment and overall well-being. In fact, it ironically could even be construed as meeting your selfish need to make the world a better place.

### **Why you must put yourself first**

If you don't put yourself first, who will? It's your job and your responsibility. If you truly believe your purpose in life is to help others, how will you accomplish this if you burn yourself out? If you truly believe it's your job to take care of others, then part of that job is taking care of yourself so that you're able to complete that job. This doesn't mean that you sit on the couch for eight hours watching football while your young children go hungry but it does mean that there are times when you must put yourself first, especially in matters of your own health. Make (not find) the time to exercise, eat regular nutritious meals, take

mental breaks, have social contacts and take time for yourself.

### **Speaking of health...**

Are you someone who says that your health is your most important priority yet you spend no time achieving or maintaining that priority? Your actions must be congruent with your beliefs. If you believe that your family and your children are your most important priorities, then consider what would happen to them without your health. Failing to ever put yourself first is likely to eventually end in burnout and ill health. It will certainly result in unhappiness and frustration. Ironically, the people that you're always putting first will perceive this and find you too irritable or unhappy to be around.

### **Don't sell others short – especially those you love**

Did you ever consider that by doing everything for everybody you may actually be doing them a disservice? If caring for yourself is your responsibility, then caring for another is their responsibility. It's one thing to help someone– it's quite another to do everything for them. In essence, instead of helping them you may actually be re-enforcing their lack of responsibility and lack of self-esteem. This is especially true in children. Parents often believe it's their job and responsibility to give their children a better life than they had. In many cases, however, this has gone so overboard that by doing everything for them we have actually failed to properly teach them independence and self-responsibility, making them less able to handle the real world and stand on their own two feet. This in turn may lead to a vicious cycle in which the parent feels like they have chronically failed in raising their child which leads to the need for even more care on the parent's part.

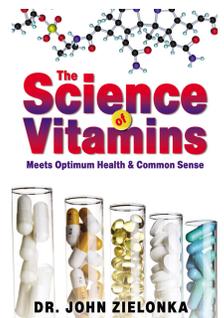
### **It's time to put pen to paper**

Take a few minutes right now (you're entitled) and write down all the things that you do for others versus what you do for yourself. First and foremost see if there's a balance and appreciate everything you do. Then go over the list again and determine when it would be better for others that you not do everything for them and that they actually learn some responsibility on their own. Finally, add the things that you would like to do for yourself and enlist others to help you achieve them. Not only will it be good for you but in turn it will be good for others. In fact, if it makes you happier you may find that others will be all too pleased to have a happier you. Last but not least, if you truly believe that you should help the world, why would you deny anyone else the same opportunity?

**When the oxygen masks come down in an emergency situation on an airplane you are instructed that you must put your mask on first. Failure to do so could result in your death and that of your loved ones.** If you're waiting for there to be thirty-four hours in a day to take time for yourself, that's never going to happen. In fact, you'd probably take the extra ten hours each day just to do more for others. It's time to put yourself first as of right now – doctor's orders.



Dr. John Zielonka is one of Canada's best known and most trusted health and wellness experts. He is the Director of Health & Wellness Canada and the Founder of National Health Day in Canada. Both a best-selling author and speaker, he is also a regular contributor to CTV Morning Live. Winner of the Consumer Choice Award for 2011, 2012 & 2013, he is owner of the Ottawa Chiropractic & Natural Health Centre, "Ottawa's Premier Centre for Health & Wellness since 1995" in the World Exchange Plaza in downtown Ottawa. He is also the owner of [Your Health Store](#), home to Canada's best vitamins and the owner of [Custom Orthotics Ottawa](#). The latest of his 5 books, "The Science of Vitamins Meets Optimum Health & Common-Sense", is now available. If we can be of service please call us today at (613) 688-1036 or please visit [www.excellenceinhealth.com](http://www.excellenceinhealth.com) or [www.drjohnzielonka.com](http://www.drjohnzielonka.com)



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