

Mom Duty: Fatigue Edition



The story is always the same.

Mom goes away for the weekend—either for a getaway with friends, or maybe to attend a conference. The trip itself is great. Mom comes home and all is well. She is just fine, thanks. Even rejuvenated.

And then, sometime in the next 24 hours, the crash comes.

For me, post-travel fatigue is inevitable no matter where I go—whether it's a once-in-a-lifetime getaway to New York City, or a quick road trip to Minnesota. Sometimes it's more manageable and all I need is a quick nap to set me right again.

But sometimes, it's a bigger deal. Sometimes, it takes me an entire day to recover. As a parent of young children, this doesn't fit well into my daily routine. Yes, my kids have grown to be very understanding and empathetic when it comes to my illness. But I **want** to be able to spend time with them. I don't want my illness to take that away from me.

To do this, I need to adjust my plans and my expectations. Our typical fun activities we enjoy together include a lot of action—visiting the museum, the library, the park, our favorite coffee shop. On days when I can't do that, we stick to fun activities we can do from the comfort of home. I'd like to share those ideas with you:

Movie Marathon: Curl up with some of your favorite films. Our go-to choices are Harry Potter or Star Wars. Bonus points if you can get the kids to build a blanket fort!

Story Time: Reading aloud is one of my favorite activities. Again, the Harry Potter series is typically our top choice, but you could read anything from a picture book to a graphic novel. If your child is old enough, they can read to you, or you can take turns.

Listen to Books: Sometimes reading out loud, especially for an extended time, can actually add to your fatigue. But you can still enjoy a good story thanks to audio books, or by taking advantage of apps such as Audible. We usually check out audio books from the library. Our recent choices have included *A Wrinkle in Time* and (you guessed it) *Harry Potter*.

The Question Game: This game is simple: Just come up with any question and everyone must answer it. Your questions can vary depending on the age of your kids and how serious or silly you want to be. It's fun, and you can learn all kinds of fascinating facts about each other. Fun questions to ask: what superpower you would choose? What would you put in your dream mansion?

Games Galore: Speaking of games, most of the classics would work well. *I Spy* is typically reserved for car rides, but there's no reason you can't play it indoors as well. Or try an improvised version of charades—they do the acting, you do the guessing from the couch. You could even have the kids get out a low-key board game or card game, such as *Go Fish*.

I'd also like to note: I realize that on some days, even the most relaxing of activities won't work. Some days, the fatigue is so strong that the only thing you can do is sleep until it passes. And it is so difficult to allow yourself to do that. As parents, we have so much guilt, and living with MS only adds to it.

But the truth is, taking care of yourself and your health will allow you to take better care of your kids. So on those tough days, please, give yourself permission to rest. Rely on your partner, a baby-sitter or a trusted friend—even turn on a movie for the kids while you get a nap in,. Do what you need to do to get yourself back to living your best life. You've got this.

What activities have worked for you? I'd love to hear ideas from other parents!