

**An Interview with Renee Peterson Trudeau**  
**Author of *Nurturing the Soul of Your Family: 10 Ways to Reconnect and Find Peace in Everyday Life***

**Many of your book’s supporters—Harville Hendrix, Jennifer Louden, Vicki Abeles— talk about the timeliness of this book, which you stress in the introduction. Why is this?**

*Nurturing the Soul of Your Family* was born from a movement I started in 2009 — inspired by my late father--called Live Inside Out. Live Inside Out challenges people to slow down and live more intentionally. More than ever, thousands of us are hitting the pause button and reflecting on what’s really important in life. Due in large part to the economic recession, our worst since the Great Depression, we’re realizing our external environment can change on a dime: job gone, house gone, investments tanked. And when what we “thought” makes us happy, vanishes—where does that leave us?

Men and women — particularly parents — are doing more soul searching than we have in the past. We’re ready for a new way of being. We want our lives, careers and relationships to have more meaning, to be more personally fulfilling. We want to feel more connected — to ourselves, to those we love and to humanity. We want to align our actions with our core values. And, we’re desperately looking for teachings and tools to help us find this balance. Not in a “this would be nice” kind of way, but in an “I’m sick and tired” of feeling bad and having my sense of happiness come from “out there.” Our outer world is a reflection of our inner world and NSOF helps readers pause, slow down, learn to nurture their inner life and live more intentionally so they’re driven by their internal values—as opposed to external or societal values. (Renee offers weekly insights on how to Live Inside Out on her global Live Inside Out Facebook community.)

**You have worked with thousands of women at all life stages from around the globe for almost 14 years through your Personal Renewal Group program and workshops. What do they share are the biggest challenges they face?**

Many women (and men) share they feel overscheduled, overworked, like they’re always rushing and life has become a giant to-do list. Overuse and misuse of technology is making them feel disconnected and it’s hard to unplug and just “be.” Due to an extreme lack of self-care — they’re parenting from an “empty cup,” feeling exhausted, and are concerned that they’re losing the ability to find joy in daily family life.

**You seem very passionate about the topic of emotional well-being for families. What inspired the work you now do?**

My mom suffered from clinical depression and I grew up navigating a lot of chaos and uncertainty (part of this was due to coming from a family of nine). I never knew what to

expect day-to-day and feelings of peace and harmony seemed fleeting and far between. My emotional well-being was entirely dependent on what was going on around me. I was never taught that it's possible to experience inner peace even in the midst of disequilibrium. *Nurturing the Soul of Your Family* teaches parents an invaluable skill: to anchor within themselves and that they can experience happiness, harmony and well-being, even in the midst of mayhem.

**Why are the rates of depression, antidepressant use and stress (in adults and children) at an all-time high?**

Most of us have bought into the mindset (whether we know it or not) that we're self-improvement projects. These feelings of unworthiness, combined with unrealistic expectations about how "life" should be, can cause tremendous stress and anxiety in parents and in kids. We're messy, raw, unpredictable, beautiful human beings who are constantly growing, stretching, expanding and evolving. Conscious parenting and family work can be some of the hardest there is. Also, our culture's over-emphasis on the "outer world," while paying very little attention to our "inner world," can be devastating. Disease and depression often manifest when we're no longer connected to our true selves. We need to work together to create a culture that advocates for the care and feeding of our hearts and souls, which is equally as important as caring for our bodies.

**Your book outlines ten paths to peace to help readers reconnect and experience more peace on a daily basis. What are they?**

- Tapping the transformative power of self-care: attune and respond to your needs and desires
- Healing from the inside out: peace begins with me
- Unplugging to plug in: remember, people first, things second
- Unleashing the healing power of nature: the ultimate antidepressant
- Making time for spiritual renewal: return to the river within
- Loving the ones you're with: spend time together (like you mean it!)
- Defining, celebrating, and honoring your family culture: what do you stand for?
- Slowing down: do less to experience more
- Exploring a new way of being: make hard choices, break free, and do it different
- Building your tribe: ask for and embrace help as you create your support network

**If families were to just embrace three or four insights or strategies from *Nurturing the Soul of Your Family* that would make a big impact on their daily lives, what would they be?**

1. Be open to a new way of being: Be bold, do it different. Be willing to take the road less traveled. Open up to the possibility that there is another way of seeing and experiencing life and begin to imagine what that would look like for your family. 2. Be compassionate

and loving with yourself: treat yourself as worthy of the same self-nurturing, acceptance, and tenderness that are afforded your children. 3. Invite in playfulness and curiosity as you begin your journey; awareness is the first step towards positive change. 4. Get support — smart people do. It makes everything easier.

**People’s desire for spiritual renewal seems to be growing. What have you observed about this as you travel and teach?**

I definitely think we’re experiencing a hunger for more sacredness, meaning and connection to something bigger than ourselves in our daily lives. I am passionate about teaching “everyday spirituality”—meaning how we connect to the Divine (whatever that means to you) in the midst of carpooling, homework and meetings. Ways of connecting to the Divine might be service to others, music, meditation or prayer, or for a huge number of us — nature. I think feeling a connection to the Divine as we work, parent and relate to one another, can have an enormous impact on our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Spiritual renewal is as essential as eating or exercise — it gives our life purpose, fulfillment and helps us feel more connected to others and to our own true nature.

**It seems your career took a radical turn when you moved from being a corporate communications director to the work you do today—teaching, speaking, writing and coaching on life balance. What inspired this shift?**

There were three “life defining” experiences. First, the loss of three family members from 1992-2000 really woke me up to the awareness that life is short and “the time is NOW!” Second, I had a life-changing experience in 1996 at Dachau — the German concentration camp — that really challenged me to reclaim my life, stop blaming others for what I didn’t like about my circumstances, and move into the driver’s seat (I write about this in Chapter 9). Last but not least, having my son Jonah in 2002, had a profound impact on me on every level and was the inspiration for the creation of the now global Personal Renewal Group program for women and my first book, *The Mother’s Guide to Self-Renewal*.

**Having coached thousands of men and women around coming into greater alignment with how they desire to live and work, what is needed for change to occur?**

Three things: Clarity and a vision for what they want (what does the life/career you desire look and feel like?), lots of self-compassion (making a life or career change is courageous work!) and taking deeply guided baby steps while getting lots of support (often we try to run before we’ve learned to crawl). Support could be from a friend, mentor, coach, a therapist, a minister or someone else. Learning to ask for and receive help can take years of practice; it’s like strengthening a muscle.

## **What's the most important thing we should be teaching our kids right now around self-care and emotional health?**

As parents we spend a lot of time and energy around our kids' cognitive and physical development, but we rarely focus on their emotional or spiritual health. Conveying to our kids—through our actions that they not only deserve and have permission to nurture their hearts and souls, but that it's their birthright to do so — could be one of the most important lessons we ever share.

## **You've got a lot going on — two businesses, a new book, travel, a family—what do you do in your day-to-day life to stay grounded and at peace?**

I practice moment-to-moment self-care. This means I do my best to attune and respond to what I most need in the moment. Sometimes this is stopping work in the middle of the day for a 10-minute meditation, going to yoga or dance when it looks like I don't have time to do this, having tea with a spiritual mentor, hiking out in nature, giving myself permission to say “no” to a new work project or social invitation or practicing “good is good enough.” I'm highly motivated to “feel good,” so I try and make choices that truly support the emotional well-being of myself and my family moment to moment.

## **What is your greatest hope for families?**

My greatest hope is that this book will inspire parents to open to new ways of being. That it will help them find their center and move through chaos and uncertainty with renewed strength and ease; live in greater alignment with their values and what matters most; slow down, live more intentionally and know what's best for themselves and their family; and release old fears and learn to live more in the present moment . And most importantly, that it will help them see that their family members can be their greatest source of joy!

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

RENÉE PETERSON TRUDEAU is the author of the new book **Nurturing the Soul of Your Family**. A sought after life balance coach/speaker and president of Career Strategists, her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Good Housekeeping* and numerous media outlets. On the faculty of Kripalu Center for Yoga & Wellness, she leads life balance workshops and retreats for Fortune 500 companies and organizations worldwide. Thousands of women in ten countries are participating in Personal Renewal Groups based on her first book, *The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal*. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and son. <http://www.reneetrudeau.com>.

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