

Self-Care for Caregivers



If you are providing care for someone else on an occasional, part-time, or full-time basis, you may need a little support yourself.

Many children of older parents underestimate the number of extra chores they are taking on to “help Mom out” or to “take care of Dad.” Miscalculating the investment can also mean misjudging the toll on their own lives.

PROTECT YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- **Take “me” time** – If this means asking someone else to watch your loved one for a few hours, then ask. You may need to look into local adult day care programs or respite care programs through your local hospice or other organization. Get out and do something fun regularly—and without guilt!
 - **Don’t isolate yourself** – Maintain your family and social relationships. You may have to adjust how and where you meet, and how often, but don’t sacrifice your own life for someone else’s. Doing so will only encourage a sense of stress and resentment.
 - **Find a support group** – Look for local support groups for caregivers, or join one online. You need to be able to talk to people who know what your challenges are—and can offer suggestions!
 - **Reduce your stress** – If you have a relaxing hobby, pursue it. If you haven’t tried meditation or yoga, now might be the time to give it a shot. Even regular stretching or breathing exercises can help reduce stress.
- **Stay active** – Exercise offers excellent mental and physical benefits, plus it reduces your chance of chronic illness and disease.
 - **Look after yourself** – Don’t postpone your own medical needs. Stay in bed if you need to. Make regular doctor/dentist appointments for yourself.
 - **Get adequate rest** – Sleep deprivation has been proven to trigger numerous physical and mental ailments. Caregiving can interrupt sleep, so rest whenever you are able. If your charge is taking a nap, you should too!

After all, when flying on an airplane, you are always told that, in case of an emergency, you should put on your air mask BEFORE assisting others. Why? If you don’t take care of yourself first, you won’t be able to care for anyone else. The same holds true for every caregiver.

PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN SELF-CARE

- **Eat properly** – Nourish your body to prevent illness and physical stress. Recognize that grabbing a quick bite of fast food on a regular basis will eventually damage your health.

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