



SELF CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

Tips and Strategies

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Taking care of a loved one can cause a person to experience stress and even burnout.

According to the Mayo Clinic, “a caregiver is anyone who provides help to another person in need, such as an ill spouse or partner, a disabled child, or an aging relative.”

Sometimes caregivers focus is on their loved one, and they forget or do not realize the importance of self care. As a result, they can experience stress (emotional or mental tension or strain due to adverse or demanding situations).

Awareness and recognition of the signs and symptoms of caregiver stress can help to mitigate the effects. Here are some things to look out for:

- Feeling overwhelmed, tiredness or fatigue
- Difficulty focusing/concentrating
- A poor sleep pattern (too much or too little sleep)
- Lack of patience/easily irritated
- Feelings of sadness
- Tension or pain in your body
- Overeating or under-eating
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Feelings of resentment
- Reduced social/leisure activities

“Your body does have a natural way to combat stress. The counter-stress system is called the ‘relaxation response,’ regulated by the parasympathetic nervous system. You can purposefully activate the relaxation response through mind-body practices like yoga, tai chi, meditation, and deep relaxation techniques” (Wei, 2018).

Tips and Strategies for Self Care

1. Breathe
2. Take Time for Breaks
3. Exercise (go for walks)
4. Practice Mindfulness Meditation
5. Take a Class Like Tai Chi
6. Pamper Yourself (get a massage, take a bath)
7. Eat Healthy
8. Take a Moment for Yourself (i.e, relax, watch a funny movie)
9. Give Yourself Permission to be Happy
10. Accept Help
11. Use Your Support Network
12. LAUGH

Also, practice self compassion (kindness for yourself), create balance in your life, think about joining a support group, and take advantage of any resources in your community for caregivers.

Taking care of yourself is essential!

Resources

Ontario Caregiver Coalition <http://www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca>

Seniors for Seniors <https://seniorsforseniors.ca>

Respite Care <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/specialneeds/respite.aspx>

Eldercare Canada <http://eldercarecanada.ca>

References

1. Mayo Clinic Staff (2018, January 19). Caregiver stress: Tips for taking care of yourself. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org>
2. Smith, M. (2019, June). Caregiver stress and burnout: Tips fo regaining your energy, optimism, and hope. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org>
3. Wei, M. (2018, October 17). Self-care for the caregiver {Web blog post}. Retrieved June 21, 2019, from <https://www.health.harvard.edu>