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8 Tips to Help Manage Stress When Caring for a Loved One

 Tips to help manage stress as a caregiver

When was the last time you put your own well-being at the top of your to-do list? It may take some patience and practice, but balancing your own needs with those of the person in your care can help you stay on a healthy path. These practical tips for caregivers may help you meet your own needs.

- 1 Carve out “me” time.** Whether it’s texting an old friend for a quick laugh or hanging out in your car just long enough to hear your favorite song, it’s important to do something every day that’s just for you. Small things like this can help you avoid caregiver burnout.
- 2 Eat for better energy.** The foods we pick play a role in our energy levels and mood. Not surprisingly, healthy foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, high-fiber foods, lean meats, and poultry are best at keeping energy levels up.
- 3 Exercise regularly.** Aim for 30 minutes of walking or other physical activity a day. And don’t worry if you don’t have a solid 30-minute time block; you’ll still get the benefits of exercise if you break it into 5- or 10-minute chunks throughout the day. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise regimen.
- 4 Recharge—both mentally and physically.** Get out of the house and do something you enjoy at least once a week—it’s a great pick-me-up. Practice stress relief techniques: consider touring a museum, taking a class, or visiting a friend. If the person you care for needs round-the-clock attention, ask a friend or family member to help out so you can take a break.
- 5 Take an active role in your own health.** Having regular medical and dental checkups, as well as other routine appointments and exams as recommended by your doctor, may help you stay healthy and strong.
- 6 Stay connected.** Connecting with friends and family is important to your health and well-being—not in person, then by phone or online. Keep the conversation upbeat and talk about things that you enjoy.
- 7 Think positively.** A little positive thinking can go a long way. Realize that it’s perfectly natural to feel guilty or overwhelmed at times. But be sure to give yourself credit for all the good things you



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for many caregivers. If you're having a hard time dealing with stress (maybe you're not sleeping well, are feeling unusually tired, or are experiencing headaches or back pain) or are feeling depressed, talk to your doctor as soon as possible. Together you can find solutions that are right for you.

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