

Caregivers: Learn to incorporate self-care into your routine to prevent burnout



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If you're caring for someone in your family or a friend, you're likely doing it out of love and compassion for that person. It's an amazingly noble endeavor, but it can take a toll on you. Your life can change significantly, and the responsibility of it all can lead to burnout, poor health and even early death. Which means that to be the best caregiver possible, you need plenty of self-care.

Unpaid family caregivers are often under a lot of stress. You might still have a job to go to daily, a family to take care of, a house to maintain and other responsibilities. Adding caregiving for a family member means pushing yourself to the absolute limit in order to show your love. The anxiety, stress and sadness of caring for someone with a serious or even terminal disease can take a toll on your mental health, possibly leading to [caregiver burnout](#).

When life gets difficult, it can be tempting to reach for a drink or take a pill to ease the stress. Stress, depression and frustration are normal parts of being a caregiver, making you want to find an easy stress reliever. But be careful: Self-medication can lead to [addiction](#), making your life all the more difficult. Don't lean on substances to get you through the day.

If you're a new caregiver, try to remember to incorporate these self-care strategies into your daily life. They'll help you manage.

1. **Develop a routine.** Depending on your charge's needs, this can be difficult and ever-changing. But having a [well-timed routine](#) can help you make sure everything gets done and you can get the kids to school and you to work on time, reducing unnecessary stress.
2. **Set realistic goals.** [Break down](#) tasks to help you get things done and feel a sense of accomplishment. Make lots of lists and set your priorities. Learn to say no and be comfortable with it.
3. **Accept help.** When people offer to help you, [accept it](#). If someone is offering, they are willing to do what they've offered, so there's no need to worry about burdening someone else. You can't do everything alone, so take the help and say "thank you."
4. **Ask for help.** If you have other family members who aren't as involved in your charge's care, ask them to help you out. Set up a respite schedule with your extended family and friends so you can get regular breaks. If you need help with supplies, create an Amazon wish list and send it to everyone who might be able to pitch in.
5. **Connect with others.** Join a support group for caregivers so you can meet with others going through similar challenges. It helps to have a place to vent your frustrations and learn that you're not alone. A support group can also help you problem-solve with strategies to effectively care for your charge.
6. **Don't neglect your health.** It can be easy to stop exercising, eating healthy or even keeping your own checkups when taking care of someone else. But your health is important, too. Without your health, it will be more difficult to help your loved one.

Caring for someone in need is a rewarding task that you won't regret. The extra time you get to spend with your family member or loved one is priceless. Remember to enjoy it when you can, and take some time to laugh. When your family member is no longer with you, you'll look back on this time with fond memories.

Author:

Harry Cline is creator of NewCaregiver.org and author of the upcoming book, *The A-Z Home Care Handbook: Health Management How-Tos for Senior Caregivers*. As a retired nursing home administrator, father of three, and caregiver to his ninety-year-old uncle, Harry knows how challenging and rewarding caregiving can be. He also understands that caregiving is often overwhelming for those just starting out. He created his website and is writing his new book to offer new caregivers everywhere help and support.