

10 Ways for Caregivers to Nurture Themselves

Don't let your own health fail while caring for others by Johnson and Johnson, [AARP](#)

Make caregiving for yourself a priority as a caregiver.

When caregivers are on call around the clock, they are often so selfless in their care of a loved one that they neglect to take care of themselves.

Did you know caregivers have a higher-than-normal incidence of getting sick? They can become so depleted that they cannot maintain the stamina to continue caring for others.

Don't let this happen to you. Follow these 10 tips to nurture yourself physically, mentally and spiritually every day, even when you are at the bedside of another. Following these tips will help you find the health and happiness you deserve. And when you take care of yourself, you can care for your loved one even better.

1. Eat well-balanced meals

And do so on a regular schedule. Take a daily multivitamin. Drink six to eight glasses of water a day.

2. Exercise every day

Move your body daily, even if it's simply 15 minutes of stretching, yoga, calisthenics or walking. Use the stairs to keep your circulation going.

3. Get outdoors

Fresh air renews the body and spirit — even if you only have time for a brief outing. When possible, open a window.

4. Get your zzz's

Strive for a minimum of seven to eight hours of consecutive sleep in a 24-hour period. Nap when your loved one naps.

5. Treat yourself

That is, get treatments for your own aches and pains before they turn into something more serious.

6. Don't ignore your emotions

Pay attention to your own feelings and emotions, and seek counseling if needed. Vent feelings to trusted family members or friends.

7. Take time for yourself

Use relaxation or stress management methods such as meditation, visualization and yoga. Books and videos are available to guide you in these techniques.

8. Read, pray or meditate for at least 15 minutes a day

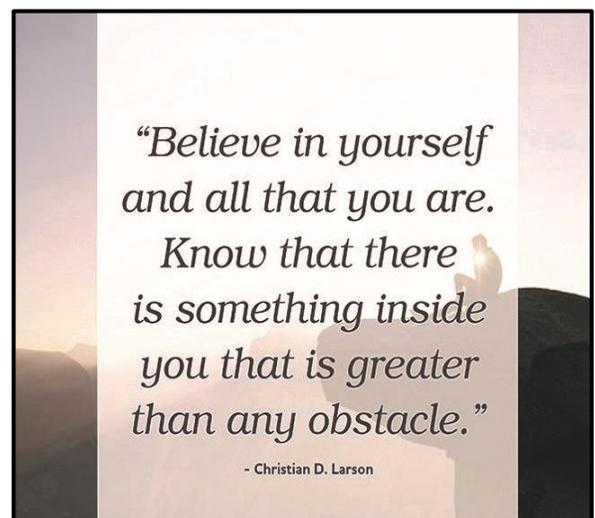
Consume daily prayer books and helpful magazines like *Today's Caregiver* and *Caring Today*, or books such as *Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul* to uplift your spirits. If you're religious, seek the counsel of a spiritual leader you trust and respect.

9. Chuckle more often

Laugh, reminisce and share stories of happy times.

10. Ask for help

Friends, family and religious groups may be eager to assist and are only waiting to be asked and directed. Doing everything yourself deprives others of an opportunity to serve.



10 TIPS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS



Seek support from other caregivers. You are not alone!



Take care of your own health so that you can be strong enough to take care of your loved one.



Accept offers of help and suggest specific things people can do to help you.



Learn how to communicate effectively with doctors.

1



Be open to new technologies that can help you care for your loved one.

2



Watch out for signs of depression and don't delay getting professional help when you need it.

3



Caregiving is hard work so take respite breaks often.

4

7



Organize medical information so it's up to date and easy to find.

6



Make sure legal documents are in order.

5



Give yourself credit for doing the best you can in one of the toughest jobs there is!

8

9

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Practical Ways to Relieve Caregiver Stress

Caregiver stress is unavoidable, but it can be managed

Stress is an unavoidable part of being a caregiver.

But for long term health and well-being, it's important to find ways to take care of ourselves and manage stress. Plus, when we're feeling better, we can be even better caregivers.

To help with that, we found a great article from Reader's Digest with 37 ways to relieve stress.

We chose some of the most practical stress relief tips for busy caregivers and added suggestions for how to make them work in everyday caregiving situations.

Top tips to reduce caregiver stress

1. Breathe easily

Deep breaths increase the amount of oxygen in your blood, which helps you relax instantly.

Shallow breathing makes your heart beat faster and your muscles tense – intensifying your stress.

When you feel stressed, put your hand near your belly button. Inhale slowly through your nose and watch your hand move out as your belly expands. Hold the breath for a few seconds, then exhale slowly. Repeat several times.

2. Visualize calm

This might sound hokey, but studies have found that visualization works for relieving stress.

When you feel tense and frustrated, imagine yourself in a calm, relaxing situation. Think about the details – how it looks, sounds, and smells.

For example, imagine that you're in a hot soothing shower with lavender-scented soap and your stress is washing away down the drain. Or, you're walking on a warm beach, listening to the crashing waves, smelling the salt air, and watching a beautiful sunset.

3. Make time for a mini self-massage

A full-on massage in a spa would be ideal, but when that's not possible, self-massage is still a great way to cope with caregiver stress. Make circular motions with your thumb to massage the palm of your other hand.

4. Say cheese – smile (even if you don't feel like it)

Smiling works in two ways. We do it when we're happy, but the act of smiling can actually cause you to feel

happier. So even if you're feeling crappy, go ahead and paste a big smile on your face. You'll actually feel better!

5. Compose a mantra

Affirmations also sound hokey, but they do work. When you tell yourself something positive, it helps you cope with whatever is happening. A good mantra could be something like:

- ✓ I feel calm and I can handle this.
- ✓ It will be ok, I can do this.
- ✓ I am good at this. I can handle this.

When you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or hopeless, repeat your stress-relieving mantra 10 times.

6. Be a fighter

Thinking things like “Why do I have to be the one taking care of mom?” or “What did I do to deserve this?” only add to your stress. When you feel like a victim, you'll be filled with self-pity and hopelessness.

If you focus on being proactive and work to improve your situation, you'll feel more in control and less stressed.

7. Put it on paper

Writing down your thoughts helps get them out of your head and gives you better perspective on the things that are bothering you.

A helpful exercise is to divide a piece of paper into two parts. On one side, write down things you might be able to change, like finding caregiving help. On the other, write down the things you can't change, like being the primary caregiver.

Focus on the things you can change because stressing over things you can't change only hurts yourself.

8. Count to 10

Caregiving is frustrating and your older adult probably gets on your last nerve several times a day. Before you say or do something you might regret, step away and give yourself a minute to collect yourself before you respond.

Count to 10, take 5 deep breaths, or do 3 stretches – whatever you need to calm down and think rationally again.

9. Take a whiff

Essential oils like lavender, peppermint, rose, and eucalyptus are soothing and relaxing.

For a simple scent diffuser, put a few pieces of rock salt in a small container and add a few drops of an essential oil. When you feel stressed, open the container and breathe in the relaxing scent.

You could also get an aromatherapy oil diffuser to create a soothing scented atmosphere in the room. Some caregivers have said that using these types of room diffusers are a great way for both them and their older adult to feel more relaxed.

10. Get moving

Getting up and moving around helps you breathe more deeply and increases circulation. If you can, go outside for a brief walk. If you can't leave your older adult, walk around inside the house.

11. Play a few bars

Music is an excellent way to relieve stress and boost mood. Classical music has been shown to have many stress relieving benefits, but almost any kind of music can have a similar effect.

The next time you're feeling overwhelmed, listen to classical music or some of your favorite tunes. Get an extra relaxation bonus by dancing like nobody's watching.

Next Step [Get the full list of 37 helpful stress relief tips in the full article at Reader's Digest](#)

Source: <https://dailycaring.com/14-practical-ways-to-relieve-caregiver-stress/>

For tips on dealing with stress due to Covid-19: <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/info-2020/control-worry-avoid-anxiety.html>

Resources for activities:

San Diego Zoo: <https://kids.sandiegozoo.org/>

Mars: <https://accessmars.withgoogle.com/>

Open Heritage Sites from Around the world: <https://artsandculture.google.com/project/openheritage>

Arm Chair Travel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAVEv86dCKHyGGG3UqWv8OH1SZFcpj-wQ>

Exercise – Beginners & Seniors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aHK2sgjBCM>

National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability offers a variety of inclusive exercises:

<https://youtu.be/eLClKvN9Qag>

Meditation for Anxiety:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pLUleLdwY4>

Free Audio

Books: <http://www.openculture.com/freeaudiobooks>

Free Public Domain Books: <https://librivox.org/>

National Parks National Parks Virtual

Tours: https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=trail%20virtual%20tours&fbclid=IwAR37uxTyHzMSXH2AkZNdmfHbrciDZ7w_C17IdHv02eZV1k0I3skr9jjJzCY

Musicals you can watch at home:

<https://www.playbill.com/article/15-broadway-plays-and-musicals-you-can-watch-on-stage-from-home>

