

Self-Care Reminders

Caregiving stress can build tension in one's mind and body. Often the very things that could help us reduce stress get sidelined in our busy days. Use this checklist to prioritize the self-care that can help you recharge and be more stress resistant.

Activity

- Exercise lowers stress and can help you sleep better. Look for enjoyable activities that you can realistically do regularly.
- Make it harder to opt out. Put it on your schedule. Get backup care. Invite a friend to join you.
- Make it part of other to-dos, such as vacuuming at a faster pace, mowing the lawn or a short, but brisk dog walk.

Sleep

- Sleep deprivation is common for caregivers. Be firm about bedtimes. Take naps as needed. Don't let sleep be optional.
- Before bed, take a moment to write down your worries; then let them go until the next day.
- Relaxation techniques, such as progressive relaxation or mindful meditation can help release tension and bring calm.

Nutrition

- Be aware that stress can push you to reach for carbohydrates because they trigger comforting brain chemicals.
- Stock quick-to-fix, "better for you" items, such as whole wheat pasta, fresh veggies, fruit, and nuts.
- Have healthy, ready-made meals handy by freezing extra portions when cooking.

Spirit

- Find one or more enjoyable ways to relax your mind and body. Give yourself permission to recharge in this way.
- Being outdoors in the fresh air and sunlight can renew both health and spirit, as well as help regulate sleep cycles.
- Notice self-defeating self-talk: "This is too much for me." Substitute a balanced thought: "This is hard, but I'm strong."
- Avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or unhealthy behaviors as a way of coping. Your EAP can help if you're struggling.

Identity

- Be proactive to reduce workplace impact. Make a point of learning about available support and flexibilities.
- Protect your finances. Explore all options for financial help and be frank with others about your limits.
- Think of socializing as a need not a want – because it is! Then schedule accordingly.
- Don't let activities that bring meaning to your life fade away. Put them on the calendar and get care coverage as needed.

Support

- Be open to turning to others for emotional and practical support. It's a strength, not a weakness to reach out.
- Consider joining a caregiver support group in your area or online. Other caregivers understand and have good tips.
- Get the medical care you need to stay strong and healthy. Make and keep health and dental check-up appointments.
- Understand that mental health professionals can help you problem-solve and learn how to manage your stress.