

Self-care for caregivers

January 24 2017, by Laura Dawahare



Credit: University of Kentucky

Caring for someone with dementia can be exhausting but many caregivers ignore their own needs in order to care for others—at the expense of their own health and welfare.

You might think you have too much on your plate or feel guilty about

doing anything for yourself when someone else desperately needs you. But you can be a more effective caregiver when you carve out some time to renew and re-energize.

Here are some tips to add caring for yourself while you are providing care for someone else.

- Stay positive. Seek out what makes you feel happy. It can be as simple as spending time snuggling with a pet, listening to music, or taking a walk to see the flowers in your neighborhood. Take one day at a time. Avoid trying to anticipate every bad thing that might happen. Replace [negative thoughts](#) and habits with positive ones (make lists of beautiful sights you have seen, spend ten minutes stretching, or focus on your breathing for a few minutes).
- Empower yourself. People assume there is no way to get help without draining their [bank account](#). There are some free or reduced-cost assistance programs that provide support, information, and/or respite. Educate yourself to avoid these false assumptions (see the resources below). By doing so, you'll feel better equipped to deal with even some of the hardest situations.
- Accept that you can't do it all and prioritize accordingly. Don't let chores and obligations compete with "you" time. Forgive yourself for being less than perfect, find help with household chores, drop outside responsibilities that you do not enjoy. Be true to your diet, medicine, and exercise routines. Do something fun every day.
- Stay Connected. Find opportunities where you can safely "let off steam" and get positive reinforcement. If family and friends aren't available, there are support groups, church families, and other activity groups that can provide fresh ideas to help you redirect or de-stress – and maybe even have fun while you are doing it.

Resources: The Sanders-Brown Center on Aging offers support, including a Memory Café that provides patients and caregivers a regular gathering place to exchange ideas and share laughter; and rural caregiver seminars offered through our TeleHealth program. For more information, call (859) 323-2997.

Sanders-Brown is also involved in research studies that explore ways to prevent or treat memory disorders or help patients and caregivers cope. [www.uky.edu/coa/adc/participat ... udy-opportunities-uk](http://www.uky.edu/coa/adc/participat...udy-opportunities-uk)

Other resources include the Alzheimer's Association (800-272-3900) and the Family Caregiver Alliance. www.caregiver.org

Taking care of yourself is one of the best things you can do for the person you're caring for. By focusing on your well-being, you can improve quality of life for all involved.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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