

Caring for Caregivers

Caregivers who set aside time to care for themselves are better able to handle the challenges of supporting someone else. Before caregiver stress turns into burnout, it's important to practice self-care to avoid a situation where you are too exhausted to properly care for your loved one or yourself.

Caregiver stress and burnout are on a continuum. You can start out feeling stressed and progress into the more serious burnout stages when the stress remains chronic.

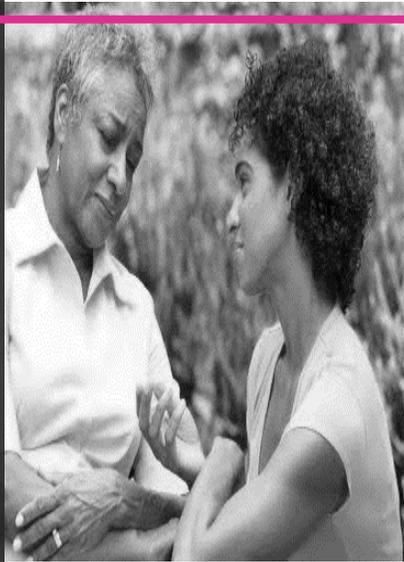
Signs of Stress

- Feeling irritable, resentful, and frustrated
- Feeling fatigue or run down
- Participating less in activities that bring you enjoyment

Signs of Burnout

- Feeling exhausted and not rested after sleeping
- Frequent illness, headaches, or other physical complaints
- Feeling anxiety or depression
- Not having time or energy to take care of yourself

Evaluate your stress level by completing the attached caregiver self-assessment questionnaire. If you are experiencing high levels of stress, consider the following self-care tips for your own well-being. They can help you recover from stress, re-energize yourself, prevent burnout, and attain more balance in your life.



Self-Care Tips for Caregivers

Caring for yourself is one of the most important and one of the most often forgotten things you can do as a caregiver. Only when we first help ourselves can we effectively help others.

- **Manage Stress Before It Manages You** – Identify sources of stress and determine the best course of action to take to make changes. Action reduces stress by giving you a sense of control. Stress management techniques can be simple activities like exercise, journaling, gardening, meditation, or meeting with a friend.
- **Take Care of Physical and Mental Health** – Schedule regular health appointments and monitor medications with your physician. Get enough sleep, eat proper nutrition, and exercise regularly. Develop good mental habits by honoring your emotions, appreciating yourself, and sharing your feelings. Seek supportive counseling from a trusted friend, therapist, or religious leader when you need to talk.
- **Get Support from Others** – Ask for help from others to begin reframing caregiving as a collaborative rather than solo responsibility. Develop a list of tasks, prioritize them, and plan together so everyone is aware of their roles and can establish routines.
- **Seek out Available Networks and Resources** – Attend a local community or online caregiver support group. They provide a safe space to share, encourage one another, offer practical advice, and may have recommendations for reliable therapists or mental health professionals.
- **Look into Respite Care Services** – Senior care facilities or nursing homes offer respite beds for a two-week period. In-home assistance through insurance providers or county divisions of aging may provide respite services as well. This gives you the chance to take time for yourself to rest and accomplish things you cannot do when caring for someone.