

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION

CHRISTIANA CARE HEALTH SYSTEM

CAREGIVER PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

PROGRAM III

- The participant will describe the signs and symptoms of caregiver stress.
 - Caregiver stress quiz
- The participant will describe the signs and symptoms of depression.
 - Depression screening tool
- The participant will discuss family dynamics and conflict as it relates to the caregiver role.
- The participant will identify stress relieving interventions:
 - Non pharmaceutical
 - Pharmaceutical
 - Therapy
- The participant will participate in stress/depression relieving exercises:
 - Muscle relaxation exercises
 - Visual imagery exercise

Caregiving: How to Get the Whole Family Involved



TIPS TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER

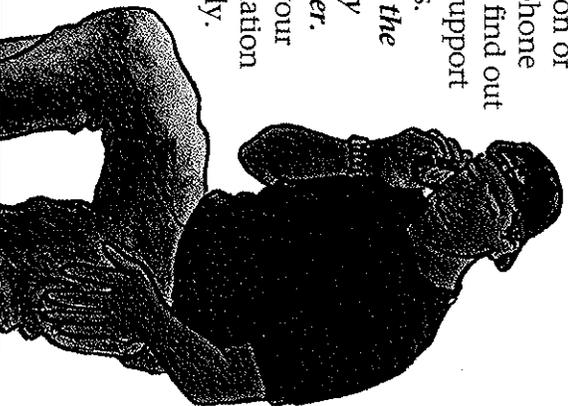
Involving the whole family in caring for and supporting an older family member can make it easier on everyone. Look inside for ideas on how you can include others in caregiving.

To find information about support groups and other services in your area, consult your local phone book. You can also call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 or visit its website at www.eldercare.gov.

Long distance support: How to help the primary caregiver when you can't be there.

What can you do if you live in another city or state?

- ✓ **Ask how you can help.** Offer ideas if the primary caregiver isn't sure.
- ✓ **Offer emotional support.** Call and check in regularly. Be someone the caregiver can confide in.
- ✓ **Offer financial support.** Contribute to the household expenses or pay for respite care.
- ✓ **Make phone visits.** Spend time on the phone visiting with the person being cared for.
- ✓ **Give breaks.** Take over caregiving duties for a day or weekend each month or a week every few months. This provides breaks for the primary caregiver.
- ✓ **Do those tasks that can be done at a distance.** Research the disease or condition or make phone calls to find out about support services.
- ✓ **Thank the primary caregiver.** Show your appreciation regularly.



Provided by: C.A.R.E. Delaware

Toll Free: (800) 223-9074

dhs.delaware.gov/dsaappd/care.html

Written by Mardi Richmond.

Designed by Eva Bernstein. Illustrated by Meg Biddle.

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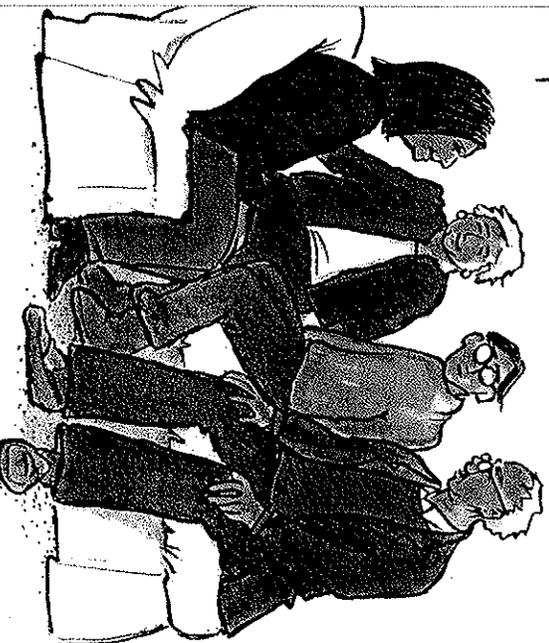
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Are you a relative or friend of an older, ill or disabled person? Is one family member responsible for providing or arranging most or all of the care? Do you want other family members and friends to become more involved? These tips can help.

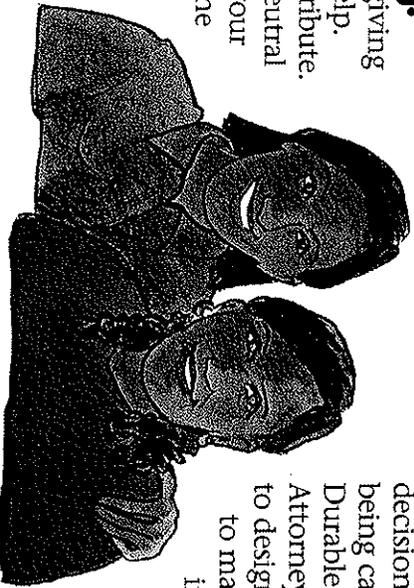
Start with a family meeting.

- ✓ Call a family meeting to discuss caregiving needs and ways for each person to help.
- ✓ Include everyone who is able to contribute.
- ✓ Consider holding the meeting in a neutral location with few distractions. Or if your family is spread out geographically, the meeting can be held by email, in a private web chat room or through telephone conferencing.
- ✓ Make up an agenda ahead of time so that everyone can contribute.

Sprint vs Marathon



- ### How will decisions be made?
- ✓ If the person being cared for is able, he or she should have a say in how care needs are met.
 - ✓ The person who has the primary responsibility – whether through providing care or arranging care by professionals – should also have a say.
 - ✓ Other family members' views should be heard and respected too.



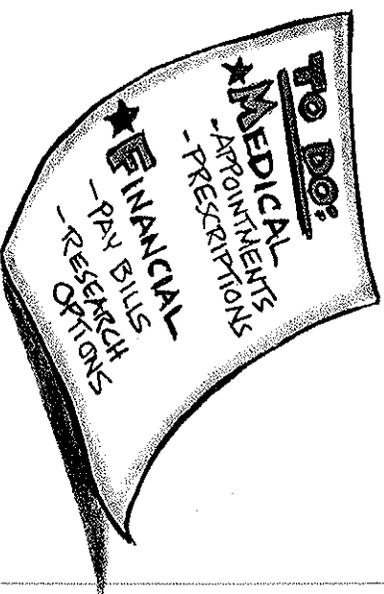
- ✓ For health and legal decisions, the person being cared for can use Durable Power of Attorney documents to designate someone to make decisions if he or she cannot.

If you disagree...

- ✓ It is common for people to disagree about the best way to approach a caregiving situation.
 - Make sure each person's concerns are heard.
 - Try to reach a compromise.
 - Avoid turning the disagreement into a feud.
 - If you cannot agree, bring in an outside person – a counselor, care manager or clergy member, for example – to act as a mediator.
 - *Send this brochure*
- ### Support the primary caregiver.
- ✓ Try to respect the person who is taking primary responsibility. He or she is doing a difficult job.
 - ✓ If you see that a problem exists, offer solutions and support, not criticism.

Don't be afraid to take charge.

- ✓ When there are several people involved, organizing tasks is very important.
- ✓ Make a list of what needs to be done. Ask people to volunteer for tasks.
- ✓ Consider having each person take responsibility for a different area of caregiving. For example, one person can take the person to medical appointments and get prescriptions filled. Another person can pay bills and research financial options.



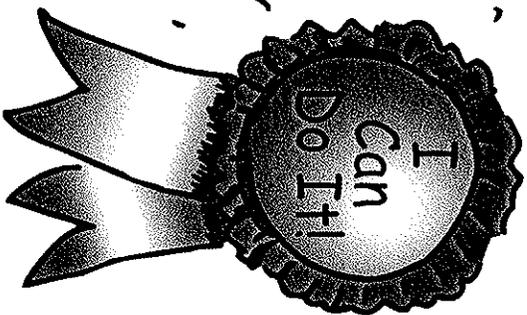
What can you do if you don't feel others are carrying their weight?

- ✓ Find out why. Sometimes a friend or family member would like to help but isn't sure how.
- ✓ Sometimes a sibling may be respecting the role of the primary caregiver by not interfering. He or she may not get involved unless asked directly.
- ✓ If a person is not participating because he or she does not agree with the course of care, talking through the issues may help.

5. Stay positive.

Be realistic about what you can and can't do. It will help you keep a positive attitude.

- ✓ There are many things that you can't control, but you can take charge of your own feelings.
- ✓ A positive attitude may help you give your loved one the best care possible.
- ✓ You may not be able to make the person you are caring for well, but you can offer dignity and do your best to help them feel safe and loved.
- ✓ Even if your loved one is not able to show happiness or appreciation, you can feel good about the job you are doing.



Caregivers have a tough job. And caregiver burnout is a real problem. Look inside for tips that can help. For more information and resources, visit the Eldercare Locator at www.eldercare.gov on the Internet. Or call 1-800-677-1116 to find services in your area.

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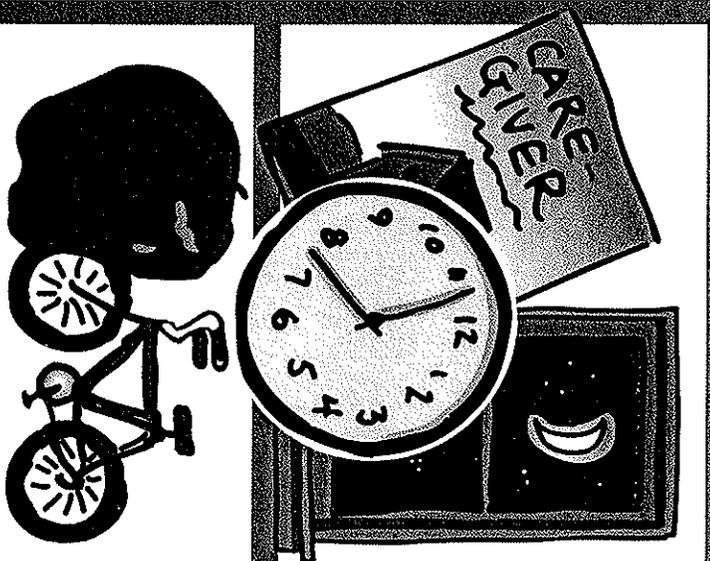
This pamphlet is not a substitute for medical care. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with a health care provider.

Written by Kristie Holt.
Designed by Eva Bernstein. Illustrated by Fred Bell.
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CARING FOR AN OLDER, ILL OR DISABLED ADULT

5 Tips to Avoid Caregiver Burnout

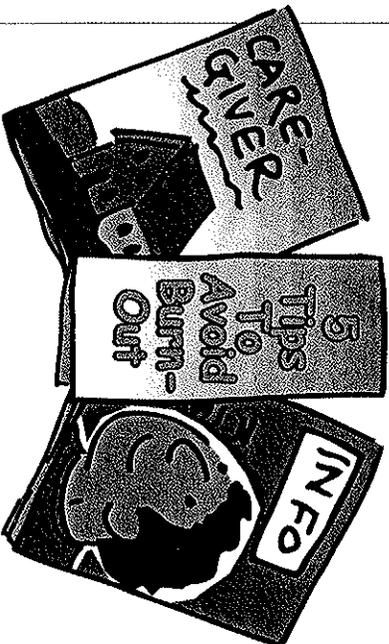


TIPS TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER

Caring for an older adult or a family member with a long-term illness can be very rewarding. It is also hard work. It can cause people to feel run down, depressed and even sick. Here are 5 things you can do to prevent burnout.

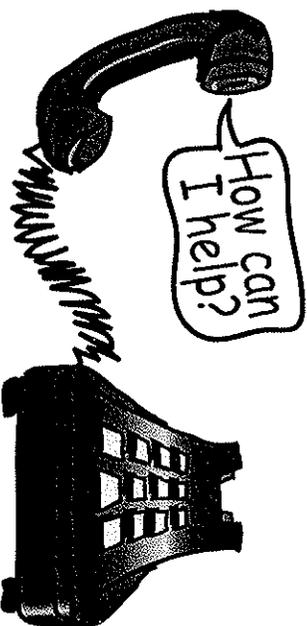
1. Learn about the condition or illness.

- Learn as much as you can about the person's condition, and how it could change over time.
- ✓ Knowing what to expect can lower your stress.
- ✓ It will help you plan for future medical costs and needs. It may give you time to learn skills you will need later on.
- ✓ Some health problems may cause your loved one to act out, say hurtful things or not even remember who you are. Knowing about the illness can help you understand when this is a symptom.



2. Ask for help.

- Feel good about the hard work that you do. But remember that you can't do it all. You will need help from others.
- ✓ Make a list of tasks you would like help with and people you can call.
- ✓ Ask a neighbor to pick up some items at the store each week. Ask family members to help with housekeeping chores, paperwork or research.
- ✓ Contact your local Area Agency on Aging to find volunteer groups in your area. Many groups help with meal delivery, transportation and respite care.



3. Take breaks.

- Find some time each day when you can safely step away from your work. For example, take a break when the person you are caring for is with a visitor. You may want to:
- ✓ Go outside for a walk or to relax in the garden. Go for a swim or bike ride.
- ✓ Read a book or listen to music.
- ✓ Chat with a friend.
- ✓ Use respite care or an adult day center or senior center for longer breaks at least once a week.

4. Take care of your health too!

- To give the best care to your loved one, you need to stay in good health.
- ✓ Get regular health and dental checkups. Ask about getting a flu shot and any health screenings you may need.
- ✓ As much as possible, keep regular sleeping patterns for yourself and the person you are caring for.
- ✓ Eat healthy meals and snacks. Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.
- ✓ Daily physical activity can lower stress, increase your energy and help keep your heart healthy.
- ✓ Your mental health is important too. Join a local or online support group. Talk to your family and friends or to a counselor.



8. Keep Your Sense of Humor

- ✓ Try to find humor in difficult situations.
- ✓ Spend time with friends who are fun and make you laugh.
- ✓ Laughter can actually release chemicals in your body that will help you feel better.

9. Exercise

- ✓ Exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress. Even a few minutes a day can help!
- ✓ Try walking. Walking with friends will give you a social outlet as well as exercise.
- ✓ If you can't leave your house or caregiving duties, you can exercise by stretching, walking or jogging in place.
- ✓ If the person you are caring for needs exercise, do it together. Try walking, dancing or seated exercises.



10. Be Good to Yourself

- ✓ You are doing a tough job and you deserve a reward.
- ✓ Buy yourself flowers, go out to dinner or watch a sunset.
- ✓ Think about what you can do for yourself (or what others can do for you) that will make you feel good. Then make it a priority!

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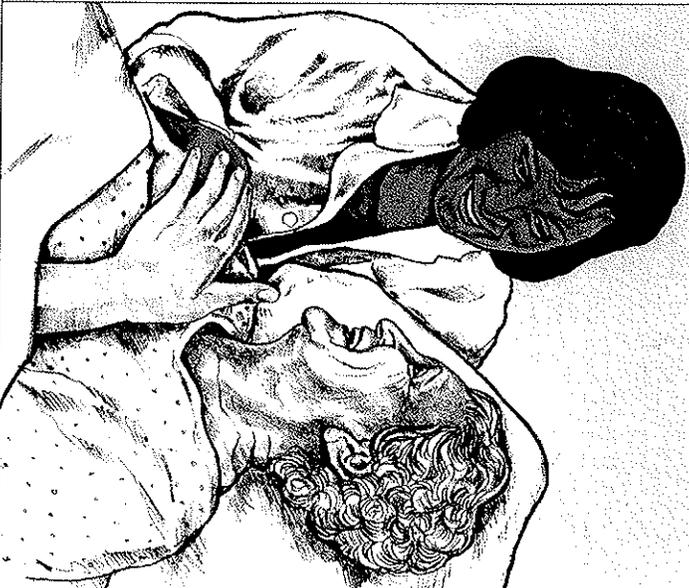
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TEN STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS

Stress and the Caregiver



A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

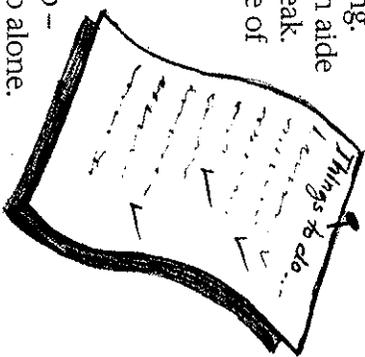
Caring for a person with an ongoing illness or for an older adult can be very stressful. These tips will help you manage the stress that comes with the difficult job of caregiving.

1. Talk with Other Caregivers

- ✓ Talking about the stresses of caregiving can give you a great deal of relief.
- ✓ Join a support group. Sharing with others who are going through the same kinds of things can help you feel better. You may also learn new ways to cope.
- ✓ You may want to talk with a friend or relative. Or, you may be more comfortable talking with a counselor.

2. Take Care of Yourself

- ✓ Make sure you take time off from caregiving. Time to yourself is essential!
- ✓ By taking breaks, you will be able to avoid "burnout" and do a better job of caregiving.
- ✓ You will also be saving your health and emotional well being.
- ✓ Consider hiring a health aide to give you a regular break.
- ✓ Don't forget to take care of yourself. Get regular checkups – your health is also important.



3. Ask for Help

- ✓ Caregiving is a huge job – and it is too much to do alone.
- ✓ Ask family or friends to pitch in. Make a list of ways they can help. Have it ready when they offer.
- ✓ Use respite services. Contact your local social services to find out about respite care, adult day care and other resources in your area. For more information, visit www.eldercare.gov on the Internet. Or, call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116.
- ✓ Consider hiring someone to clean your house and run errands.

4. Learn to Let Go

- ✓ Focus on those things that are most important. Let go of less important commitments.
- ✓ Accept that you may not be able to do things the way you used to. For example, you may not be able to clean your house as often or do the dishes after every meal.

5. Rest As Much As You Can

- ✓ Without good rest, you will quickly wear down. Things that used to be manageable may seem unbearable!
- ✓ Help the person you are caring for get on a sleep schedule so that you can too.
- ✓ If possible, sleep in a different room. Use a monitor to let you know if the person wakes up.
- ✓ Have someone else stay with the person one or two nights a week so that you can catch up on sleep.

6. Eat Well

- ✓ Food is our body's fuel. Without good food, we quickly wear down.
- ✓ Eat regular, healthy meals. Make sure you get plenty of fruits, vegetables, grains and protein.
- ✓ Avoid eating too much sugar, fat and salt.
- ✓ Avoid foods and drinks with caffeine.

7. Avoid Alcohol

- ✓ Alcohol and other drugs may seem like they are helping stress. But in the long run, they will wear your body down.
- ✓ If you are using alcohol or other drugs to help you deal with stress, talk to your doctor or a counselor!



Are You Taking Care or Caretaking?

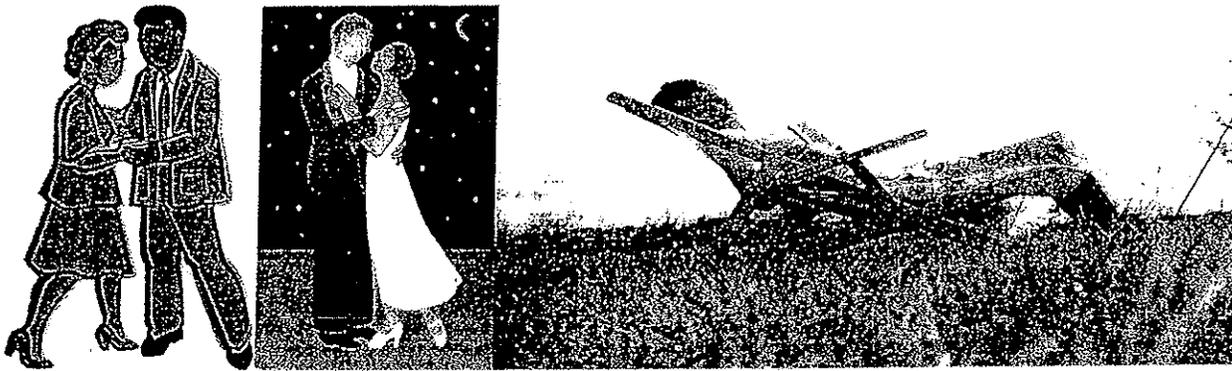
Though composed of the same two words, taking care and caretaking are vastly different in practice. Taking care is healthy caregiving—whether for children, spouses, friends, or parents that includes drawing appropriate boundaries, taking your own needs into consideration and knowing when to say no. Caretaking, on the other hand, is about rescuing, constantly placing others' needs before your own and taking inappropriate responsibility for others' emotions and actions.

The difference is in the intention: Are you in service (taking care) or is there a payoff (caretaking)? Payoffs are usually subtle. Caretaking may help you relieve guilt, feel better about yourself, or get attention or validation. But there is a cost to caretaking, as well.

Caretaking can result in resentments, emotional and physical depletion, and/or feeling disconnected from your inner self. Complete this questionnaire to discover how much care-taking you do.

	<u>True</u>	<u>False</u>
1) I feel safer when giving rather receiving.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) I am "on call" to friends with problems at any hour of the day or night.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) I'm great at being nurturing and compassionate with others, but not so great at giving it to myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) I feel responsible for others' "thoughts," feelings, behaviors, problems, choices, well-being, health and destiny.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) It's more important to me to please other people than to please myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) I hate to see others feeling sad or angry or jealous; I try to fix the situation so that they don't feel bad any more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) I prefer to focus on the needs of others; if I focus on my own emotions and needs, I feel selfish and afraid that the other person won't want to be around me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) I take care of other people by fixing their flaws for them, I just want to help them be the best they can be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) I feel unappreciated much of the time. I give and I give and give, and no one ever notices or gives anything back.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) I feel controlled by the needs of others, yet my needs are never met.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11) I often give unsolicited advice. I really want to help others see the light.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12) I give away my energy to others in order to be loved and accepted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13) I grow resentful when others are not willing to "give" like I do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) I see other people as the source of my problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15) I don't really know what I need and want, but I always know what other people need, want and should do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16) I don't wait to be asked. If I see that someone needs me, I just jump right in and help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17) I'm often exhausted from taking care of everyone around me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18) I've always been the giver in my relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

It can be hard to differentiate between helping that truly helps and helping that actually harms. You may find that detaching with love is the most helpful approach.



How Well Do You Stay in the Present?

The way to live a full and rich life, to deepen our connections with others and to experience true intimacy is by staying in the present moment. Yet much of what we do and how we live takes us out of the present and ratchets us into some unknown future or drags us back into the mire of the past. Other times, we simply “space out,” disconnect from where we are, who we’re with, and what we’re doing.

The great spiritual teacher Thich Nhat Hanh said mindfulness is to be present in the present moment. Take the following quiz to discover how much, and in what ways you detach from the present moment.

True False

- 1. I have a tendency to live in the future, projecting into tomorrow, or next week or even years from now.
 - 2. I spend much of my time thinking about the past, replaying conversations or reliving incidents or events, or I play “what if” in my mind.
 - 3. Sometimes when I’m in conversation with someone, I can’t remember what was just said.
 - 4. When eating a meal, my family often watches TV or videos or reads.
 - 5. In talking with someone, I think of how I’m going to respond rather than listening to what the other person is saying.
 - 6. I tend to worry.
 - 7. I try to figure out how things will work out or what someone else will do.
 - 8. I allow the telephone or pager to interrupt whatever I’m doing.
 - 9. I often/frequently hope for something better or different.
 - 10. I often/frequently dread something worse will happen.
-

- | True | False | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. I find myself always busy, with never an empty or spare moment. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. When I am feeling uncomfortable in a situation, I change the subject or get up and move around, or get something to eat /drink/smoke/do. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. In some situations, I find myself getting sleepy or yawning when I am not really tired. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. I find it difficult to maintain eye contact when I'm talking with someone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Sometimes I can't remember what I just read or I don't know what just took place in the movie or video I'm watching. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. When I'm with certain people, we talk about others (gossiping), discussing shortcomings or talking about their problems). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. I take my cell phone everywhere and it's always on. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. My conversations with others tend to be about superficial subjects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. Rather than staying with my emotions and naming them ("I am feeling") I attempt to alter the feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. In my family or with my partner, we watch TV programs that we don't really care about rather than interact with each other. |

Many of us may feel a push pull when it comes to intimacy. We want to be closer to others, but the vulnerability that it demands is too frightening. Or we may feel restless or distracted or just plain uncomfortable when we attempt to stay in the present.



How Well Do You Manage Stress?

The impact of stress accumulates, and, beyond the ongoing, regular stress that comes from living in our high-impact culture, specific life events can really knock us for a loop. Even happy changes can cause bumps in the road, which we register both physically and emotionally. While we can't eliminate stress from our lives, we can learn where our hot spots are and how to best reduce and manage the stress we do experience.

- | True | False | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I set the pace for the day by beginning with peaceful thinking either through reading an inspiring passage, saying a prayer or acknowledging the gift of a fresh, new day. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Throughout the day I live in the moment. I don't brood about a past event or fret about the future. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Each day I do something physical even if it's just a walk around the block or a 20 minute workout. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I eat healthfully and take the time to enjoy my meals. I set aside work, driving and other activities while I eat. No multi-tasking. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. I think positively. I view problems as challenges and obstacles as opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. I say no when I need to. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. I leave open time in my day for doing something spontaneous. Or do nothing. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. When I sense tension in my body, I practice progressive muscle relaxation, beginning with my face and moving down to my feet. I remember to breathe. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. My daily "to do" list contains only that which can be accomplished in a day-eve if it's only part of a larger project. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. I am willing to settle for "good enough." I don't make constant demands on myself to have the "best" of anything (cleanest house, finest yard, best meals). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Throughout the day, I create peaceful images in my mind where I can retreat for a moment to rest and refill. A Sunlit beach, a shady forest, a quiet stream. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. When I am aware of feelings of anger, irritability, cynicism beginning to build, I replace them with thoughts of peace, hope, patience and joy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. I use my time and energy to make changes where I can and accept the things I cannot change. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. When I am able, I plan events that I know will cause stress (moving, giving a party, buying a new car) around times when less is going on (a quiet time at work, no pressing deadlines, no holidays in sight, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. I use a journal not just to write about stressful events and problems, but to express my thoughts and feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. I plan time off regularly. A weekend away. A long vacation. One day a month, just for me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. I talk to my friends and family about what's going on with me and when I need to, I seek guidance and counseling from professionals. |

If you're going through an especially stressful time or experiencing difficulty dealing with stress in your life, don't hesitate to ask for help.



CHRISTIANA CARE

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION

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Kent County 302-674-7710
Sussex County 302-855-9700

Depression in the Elderly

Symptoms of Depression

- Decrease in sleeping
- Changes in usual activity level
- Lethargy or agitation
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Decrease in energy or increased fatigue
- Depressed or sad mood
- Feelings of guilt
- Decreased concentration
- Decreased self-confidence or self-esteem
- Suicidal ideation or thoughts of death

The elderly usually exhibit a very different set of symptoms, however, when they are experiencing a depression. Gellberd (1998) states older individuals often report increased anxiety or significant changes in memory or cognition. Frequently, the elderly complain of somatic or physical distress without any mention of their emotional status.

If you are concerned that a loved one is experiencing depression, contact your physician.



Joint Commission
on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

CAREGIVER STRESS: Symptoms and Tips

Do you have "A" – "SAD" – "SHIELD?"

"A" ---ANGER at the person with Alzheimer's or others

"S" ---SOCIAL withdrawal, from friends and activities

"A" ---ANXIETY about facing another day or the future

"D" ---DENIAL about the disease and its effect on your loved one

"S" ---SLEEPLESSNESS caused by never-ending concerns

"H" ---HEALTH problems take their toll, mentally and physically

"I" ---IRRITABILITY leads to moodiness and negativity

"E" ---EXHAUSTION makes it impossible to do tasks

"L" ---LETHARGIC physically and slow mentally, all day

"D" ---DEPRESSION breaks your spirit and ability to cope

WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY

- Take one day at a time
- Accept changes as they occur
- Be realistic about what you can do
- Engage in legal and financial planning
- Find resources that are available in your community
- Get help from family, friends and community resources
- Become educated about Alzheimer's disease and caregiving techniques
- Take care of yourself by watching your diet, exercising, and getting plenty of rest
- Manage your level of stress by consulting a physician and using relaxation techniques
- Give yourself credit for what you have accomplished; don't feel guilty, if you lose patience or can't do everything on your own.



WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS

Get up 15 minutes earlier.
 Prepare for the morning the night before.
 Avoid tight fitting clothes.
 Avoid relying on chemical aids.
 Set appointments ahead.
 Don't rely on your memory...write it down.
 Practice preventive maintenance.
 Make duplicate keys.
 Say "NO" more often.
 Set priorities in your life.
 Avoid negative people.
 Use time wisely.
 Simplify meal times.
 Always make copies of important papers.
 Anticipate your needs.
 Repair anything that doesn't work properly.
 Ask for help with the jobs you dislike.
 Break large tasks into bite-size portions.
 Look at problems as a challenge.
 Look for the silver lining.
 Say something nice to someone.
 Teach a kid to fly a kite.
 Walk in the rain.
 Schedule playtime into every day.
 Take a bubble bath.
 Believe in yourself.
 Stop saying negative things to yourself.
 Visualize yourself winning.
 Develop your sense of humor.
 Have goals for yourself.
 Dance a jig.
 Say hello to a stranger.
 Ask a friend for a hug.
 Look up at the stars.
 Practice breathing slowly.
 Learn to whistle a tune.
 Read a poem.
 Listen to a symphony.
 Watch a ballet.
 Read a story curled up in bed.
 Do a brand new thing.
 Stop a bad habit.
 Buy yourself flowers.
 Take time to smell the flowers.
 Find support from others.
 Ask someone to be your "Vent Partner."
 Do it today.
 Work at being cheerful and optimistic.

Put safety first.
 Do everything in moderation.
 Be aware of the decisions you make.
 Pay attention to your appearance.
 Strive for excellence NOT perfection.
 Stretch your limits a little each day.
 Look at a work of art.
 Hum a jingle.
 Maintain your weight.
 Plant a tree.
 Feed the birds.
 Practice grace under pressure.
 Stand up and stretch.
 Always have a plan "B."
 Learn a new doodle.
 Memorize a joke.
 Be responsible for your feelings.
 Learn to meet your own needs.
 Become a better listener.
 Know your limitations and let others know them too.
 Tell someone to have a good day in Pig Latin.
 Throw a paper airplane.
 Exercise every day.
 Learn the words to a new song.
 Get to work early.
 Clean out one closet.
 Play patty cake with a toddler.
 Go on a picnic.
 Take a different route to work.
 Leave work early (with permission).
 Watch a movie and eat popcorn.
 Write a note to a far away friend.
 Go to a ball game and scream.
 Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight.
 Recognize the importance of unconditional love.
 Remember that stress is an attitude.
 Keep a journal.
 Practice a monster smile.
 Remember you always have options.
 Develop a support network of people, places and things.
 Quit trying to "fix" other people.
 Get enough sleep.
 Talk less and listen more.
 Freely praise other people.
 Relax, watch a sunset.

8 Deadly Myths About Stress

Here are 8 common myths about stress.

Published on May 25, 2010 by Andrew Bernstein In *The Myth of Stress*

There are many myths about stress preventing us from living longer, happier, and healthier lives. Here are eight of the most common:

- 1. Stress comes from your circumstances.** This seems true, just as the Earth seems flat, but stress actually comes from the thoughts you have about your circumstances, not the circumstances themselves. This is why people have different emotional reactions to the same situation.
- 2. Stress is a motivator.** We need to distinguish between stress and stimulation. Having deadlines, setting goals, and pushing yourself to perform at capacity are stimulating. Stress is when you're anxious, upset, or frustrated, which dramatically reduce your ability to perform. People who get things done under stress are succeeding in spite of their stress, not because of it.
- 3. Some stress is good for you.** Another popular myth, initially created by Dr. Hans Selye, the founder of the modern stress concept. Selye found that activities like sports and sex also produced a surge in stress hormones, so he promoted the idea of good stress. But research since then has proven that stress contributes to 75% to 90% of medical conditions, including the six leading causes of death. Stimulation is good for you (see #2 above). Stress is not.
- 4. Without stress in your life, you would just sit around and drool.** Some people are so used to experiencing stress that they don't remember what life was like without it. But look at young children. They experience very little stress, yet have plenty of energy to explore their interests. The same can be true for adults, even with the responsibilities we have.
- 5. The best way to deal with stress is to exercise, breathe, and relax.** Remember that stress doesn't come from what's going on in your life. It comes from *your thoughts about* what's going on in your life. Popular "stress management" tools relieve the *effects* of stress, but not the *cause*, so the stress returns again and again. A more effective long-term approach involves learning to think differently about challenging situations so the stress is no longer produced.
- 6. Stress is a choice.** Stress is a byproduct of subconscious beliefs you have about the world. You can't choose not to believe something. You believe it because you think it's true. To eliminate stress, you must learn to challenge these beliefs so that you see them differently. That's not a function of choice. It's a function of insight.
- 7. Stress is inevitable.** Look for something you're not bothered by that other people are (a fear of heights, driving fast, flying). People who experience stress in those situations may say that it's inevitable because they can't imagine not feeling stress, but you know that this isn't so. Their emotions come from their beliefs. The same is true for whatever you're stressed out about now (money, health, work, etc.). It's entirely possible to think differently and not experience stress in your life, as unlikely as that sounds. It just requires a different approach.
- 8. Stress is not a big deal.** The word "stress" is sometimes confined to anxiety about deadlines, which most people can live with, but it's actually much bigger. Every moment of frustration you have about your job, every point of friction in your relationships at work and at home, every fear or concern you have about money, your health, and the future—essentially, the sum total of all the negative emotions in your life, from the moment you get up until the moment you lie down, is stress. For most individuals, it is a very big deal.

We hesitate to admit how big it is because of the myths above, which are woven tightly into our culture and prevent us from dealing with stress more effectively. But with a little application, anyone can learn the truth about how stress works and, instead of simply managing it, start *eliminating* it.



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Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress

By Mayo Clinic staff

Original Article: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/relaxation-technique/SR00007>

Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress

Relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms and help you enjoy a better quality of life, especially if you have an illness. Explore relaxation techniques you can do by yourself.

By Mayo Clinic staff

Relaxation techniques are a great way to help with stress management. Relaxation isn't just about peace of mind or enjoying a hobby. Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body. Relaxation techniques can help you cope with everyday stress and with stress related to various health problems, such as cancer and pain.

Whether your stress is spiraling out of control or you've already got it tamed, you can benefit from learning relaxation techniques. Learning basic relaxation techniques is easy. Relaxation techniques also are often free or low cost, pose little

risk and can be done just about anywhere. Explore these simple relaxation techniques and get started on de-stressing your life and improving your health.

The benefits of relaxation techniques

When faced with numerous responsibilities and tasks or the demands of an illness, relaxation techniques may take a back seat in your life. But that means you might miss out on the health benefits of relaxation.

Practicing relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by:

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Slowing your breathing rate
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration
- Reducing anger and frustration
- Boosting confidence to handle problems

To get the most benefit, use relaxation techniques along with other positive coping methods, such as exercising, getting enough sleep, and reaching out to supportive family and friends.

Types of relaxation techniques

Health professionals such as complementary and alternative medicine practitioners, doctors and psychotherapists can teach various relaxation techniques. But if you prefer, you also can learn some relaxation techniques on your own.

In general, relaxation techniques involve refocusing your attention on something calming and increasing awareness of your body. It doesn't matter which relaxation technique you choose. What matters is that you try to practice relaxation regularly to reap its benefits.

There are several main types of relaxation techniques, including:

- **Autogenic relaxation.** Autogenic means something that comes from within you. In this relaxation technique, you use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress. You repeat words or suggestions in your mind to relax and reduce muscle tension. For example, you may imagine a peaceful setting and then focus on controlled, relaxing breathing, slowing your heart rate, or feeling different physical sensations, such as relaxing each arm or leg one by one.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** In this relaxation technique, you focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. You become more aware of physical sensations. One method of progressive muscle relaxation is to start by tensing and relaxing the muscles in your toes and progressively working your way up to your neck and head. You can also start with your head and neck and work down to your toes. Tense your muscles for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds, and repeat.
- **Visualization.** In this relaxation technique, you form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. During visualization, try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch. If you imagine relaxing at the ocean, for instance, think about such things as the smell of salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body. You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot and loosen any tight clothing.

Other common relaxation techniques include:

- Hypnosis
- Massage
- Meditation

- Tai chi
- Yoga

Relaxation techniques take practice

As you learn relaxation techniques, you'll become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress. Once you know what the stress response feels like, you can make a conscious effort to practice a relaxation technique the moment you start to feel stress symptoms. This can prevent stress from spiraling out of control.

Remember that relaxation techniques are skills. And as with any skill, your ability to relax improves with practice. Be patient with yourself — don't let your effort to practice relaxation techniques become yet another stressor. If one relaxation technique doesn't work for you, try another. If none of your efforts at stress reduction seem to work, talk to your doctor about other options.

Also, bear in mind that some people, especially those with serious psychological issues and a history of abuse, may experience feelings of emotional discomfort during some relaxation techniques. Although this is rare, if you experience emotional discomfort during relaxation techniques, stop what you're doing and consider talking to your health care professional or mental health provider.

References

May 19, 2011

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Check List The Ideal Caregiver

The Ideal Caregiver is:

Emotionally and physically capable of handling the work

Able to share duties and responsibilities with other willing family members

Able to plan solutions and solve problems instead of withdrawing under stress

Able to speak in a simple and clear way

Comfortable giving and receiving help

Able to handle unpleasant tasks such as changing diapers, bathing, or cleaning bedsores

In good health and has energy, skill, and the ability to adapt

Able to cope with anger and frustration

Able to afford respite (back-up) care when necessary

Able to make this person feel useful and needed

Valued by other family members

Able to adjust to the future needs and wishes of the person in care

Aware of other care options and willing to explore them

If you have most of these traits, you may be a good candidate to provide home care. However, consider the list called Possible Hazards of Care in the Home and be honest with yourself about your ability to cope.

70 Ways for Self Care

Evelyn Lim

<http://www.abundancetapestry.com>

Self care is an act of loving yourself. Maybe the act is to nourish your mind, body or spirit. Whatever it is, you do something nurturing. You don't put off from taking a needed break or having some me-time. **You create a better relationship with self.**

Self care is taking care of your inner home. And obviously, you do not wreck yourself apart when you undertake self-care. This means that you don't give excuses for feeling tired, crying or going for an expensive pedicure. You please yourself rather than others. Very importantly, you do not experience guilt, shame or blame. So it may mean eating more, less or having an indulgence every now and then. You take a balanced approach to overall holistic well-being. When taking care of a home, you would clear out the rubbish, clean, scrub, make it comfortable and beautify it. You feel nourished from within. There are many ways that you can undertake self care.

1. *Have a pampering massage.* Book a session with a therapist instead of sitting on a massage chair. Get an hour-long full body massage for complete relaxation of your tense muscles.
2. *Learn to say no.* So you have been feeling overwhelmed because you are in the habit of saying yes to all kinds of requests? Learn to say no if you need some time and attention for yourself.
3. *Meditate.* This is my favorite tip! I enjoy being in a peaceful sanctuary, away from the noise, crowd and clutter. So whenever I am feeling tense, I would retreat into silence for a while. I practice breath meditation, allowing me to relax my mind. Consider incorporating this tip as part of your regular routine too! You will experience the benefits of mediation.
4. *Have healthy meals.* If you have been eating way too much over Christmas, New Year or any festive period, then give your body a break. Go easy on the meats and eat more of the greens.
5. *Have a snack.* It's okay to indulge every once in a while, especially when you have already been pretty good at sticking to a healthy diet regime. Go snack if it makes you feel good – even if it is potato chips! Just know when to stop!
6. *Wear comfortable clothes.* Forget the skimpy G-string! Wear big comfortable underwear.
7. *Take a warm bath.* Don't just take a quick shower but soak yourself in a long and relaxing bath. You would feel rejuvenated for sure!
8. *Go offline.* Reduce mental clutter by going off the internet for a day or even a week.
9. *Switch off your cell phone.* Just for a day or two, take a break from answering calls or responding to missed calls. It's okay! The world won't collapse without you.
10. *Take an afternoon nap.* If you are feeling tired during the day, take a nap. No excuses are needed, even if you end up sleeping way longer than what is considered a power nap.
11. *Pick up a new hobby.* It's not about work all the time. Pick up a new hobby to nurture your soul. A crafty hobby, for instance, is about aligning yourself with “creative” energies.
12. *Watch a funny movie.* Heard of the phrase, “laughter is the best medicine”? A silly or funny show can just do the trick in helping you loosen up!
13. *Journal.* Writing your thoughts and feelings in your diary or on a blog is self-help therapy that does not cost you a single cent.

14. *Take walks in the park.* Another of my favorite tip. Spend time in a botanical garden of smiling orchids and experience wellness right away.
15. *Do yoga.* Yoga is a mind-body-spirit practice that helps you feel centered. Through appropriate yoga postures, you get to balance your chakras, stretch for exercise and experience a sense of connection with the universe.
16. *Sing or listen to music.* Singing is a vocal expression of your heart. It allows you to connect with your feelings. Putting on some music can also help you to get in touch with your soul.
17. *Catch up with an old friend.* Set aside some time to catch up for idle chit chat. Look up an old friend and laugh over old times.
18. *Read comics.* Comics make us think and laugh. Some offer a wonderful escape into an imaginary world, while others take us back to our childhood.
19. *Sleep in on Sunday.* It's nice to be able to sleep in rather than wake up in a rush.
20. *Write poetry.* Expressing yourself through poetry is making music out of your thoughts and feelings.
21. *Go for a card reading.* Angelic or goddesses cards have nurturing messages. For self divination, try the packs by Doreen Virtue.
22. *Do a detoxification cleanse.* If you have been feeling lethargic, consider doing a cleansing routine. A detoxification cleanse helps to remove toxins, making you feel "lighter", more energized and less tired.
23. *Burn some aromatherapy candles.* Use scent therapy to invoke the right mood, release your tension or simply to clear the air of toxins.
24. *Remove physical clutter.* Having excessive physical clutter around can weigh you down. Clear your desk to make some space. Throw away things that can no longer be used. And most certainly, give away your old clothes to the needy.
25. *Play some music.* Play the piano, violin or any musical instrument that allows you to lose yourself in the moment.
26. *Get a babysitter.* Caring for your baby is important but it does not hurt to take a few hours off for some needed rest.
27. *Reduce alcohol intake.* Drinking alcohol to make you forget your worries is a short-sighted measure. Getting intoxicated does not erase your problems. Having clarity, on the other hand, helps.
28. *Get some cleaning help.* Take a break from having to do ironing or washing that dirty pile of plates in your kitchen sink. Hire help.
29. *Go to the beach.* Let the sea breeze work its magic on you. Feel the sand from below your feet. Get a lift in your spirits after a trip to the beach.
30. *Have a delicious scoop or two of chocolate ice-cream* – my favorite tip anytime!
31. *Read a book.* It always feels nice to curl up in a nice comfortable chair to read a great book from start to finish. A memoir that I recommend reading is *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.
32. *Scrapbook.* Instead of simply creating scrapbook albums for photos, I have been using scrapbook ideas to make collections of inspirational quotes and sayings. My favorite pictures are featured here, here and here.
33. *Flip through albums of old photographs.* Old photos invoke happy memories. I enjoy going through my travel albums. Looking at my pictures – whether they are taken in Alaska, Mexico, Spain, England or Japan – makes me smile.
34. *Bake a cake.* Baking or cooking, for that matter, can be therapeutic. My husband enjoys cooking up a storm every once in a while.

35. *Express appreciation for your blessings.* Learn how to start a gratitude journal [here](#).
36. *Swing on a swing.* There is something about swings that make many of us feel free, young and loving life!
37. *Go for a swim.* Whether we choose to take a dip or swim laps, being in the water makes us feel refreshed and revitalized. Which reminds me. I need to make use of the condominium pool downstairs more often!
38. *Try retail therapy.* It's always nice to give yourself a treat every now and then. Once again, no excuses needed! Don't stinge on yourself by buying presents for your children or others only. Buy something lovely for yourself, like a new shade of lipstick for instance!
39. *Play with young children.* Being around young children can bring out your child-like side. In case you are wondering, you have always had this side in you. Being child-like is to be who you are, without a worry in the world.
40. *Paint.* Painting is therapeutic self-care that you wouldn't want to miss out on. The last time you painted may have been years ago, when you were little. You awaken the creative streak in you that has long been forgotten.
41. *Dance.* Dancing can be a form of relaxation for some. My daughter loves to dance in front of the mirror when no one is looking...ha. Forget about trying to master the moonwalk, just dance – with wild abandonment.
42. *Pick up nature photography.* Don't just take family portraits or posed pictures, capture nature in its raw beauty. As you view through your lens, keep a record of the moments that take your breath away.
43. *Listen to personal development audio tapes for self care.* There are audios that you can purchase to build self esteem or calmness. Guided meditation tapes are also excellent buys!
44. *Hug a soft cuddly teddy bear.* Or ask for a hug from someone.
45. *Practice some creative visualization.* Engage in an afternoon of dreams by practicing the pink bubble technique for creative visualization.
46. *Get a workout.* Make use of the nearby gym facilities and get some exercise. Feel better after breaking out in beads of sweat!
47. *Read a travel magazine.* Let your mind take you away on a vacation. See yourself holidaying in the place that you have always wanted to go, and doing the things you have always wanted to do.
48. *Take a vacation.* Okay, I have to admit that nothing beats the actual experience of travel. Refrain from booking a group tour that tries to pack 10 countries in 5 days. Go on a leisurely one, instead. You can do many of your bookings yourself by researching online.
49. *Go on a meditation retreat.* A vacation and a retreat is not quite the same thing. For a vacation, your focus is about fun and relaxation. In a meditation retreat, you are setting aside dedicated days for quiet contemplation.
50. *Let go of emotional clutter.* Spend an afternoon, night or simply allocate some time to clear emotional clutter. I do this at least 2-3 times per week, using emotional healing methods such as The Sedona Method.
51. *Quit smoking.* Smoking introduces toxins into your body. The chance of getting lung cancer goes up. Good self care is taking care of your body and getting rid of habits that do not serve you.
52. *Have a vase of fresh flowers on your desk/home.* This is a simple, yet often overlooked, tip. If you spend a long time at your desk, it is a great idea to bring in some nature and sunshine indoors.
53. *Heal your inner child.* When we are reacting out of our childhood emotional wounds, then what we are feeling may have very little to do with the situation we are in or with the people with whom

we are dealing in the moment. In order to start being in the moment in a healthy, age-appropriate way it is necessary to heal our "inner child." The inner child we need to heal is because we have been unconsciously reacting to life out of the emotional wounds and attitudes, the old tapes, of our childhoods

54. *Listen to music.* Putting on some music can also help you to get in touch with your soul. New age meditative music can be therapeutic, healing and calming.

55. *Drink plenty of water.* It is important to drink the daily 7-8 glasses of plain water daily. Juices, herbal teas or coffee do not count in this daily requirement.

56. *Switch to herbal tea.* To reduce intake of caffeine, cut down on the coffee that you are drinking. Consider a switch to herbal tea!

57. *Shield yourself from negativity.* Find yourself surrounded by toxic criticism, scathing remarks and unsupportive comments? Stay away from people who are negative. If you need to be near them, consider shielding yourself energetically.

58. *Write a love letter to yourself.* Project 10 years from now. Write a letter of love and encouragement to your current self.

59. *Enhance yourself by attending workshops.* There are different workshops that you can attend for enhancing the self. These include life coaching, public speaking, personal grooming and so on. Taking an active interest in your personal development is self-care.

60. *Practice tai-chi.* Tai-chi is a mind-body-spirit practice that is described as "meditation in motion". At first awkward, you will eventually find yourself engaged in a graceful dance after some practice.

61. *Trash email messages that you won't read.* I know you have been meaning to but you have been too busy to read the pile of emails in your inbox. And you know that it will take you ages to get to them. Well, either organize them into folders for those that you are likely to read even after weeks or send those that you suspect you won't ever read into the trash bin.

62. *Take leisurely drives.* Take a drive and check out areas that you have never ventured before. Doing so tunes you into the energetic vibrations of possibility, play and adventure. You release yourself from the repetitive strains of daily pressures.

63. *Get grounded.* If you find yourself being flighty and unable to get settled, then get some grounding done.

64. *Make a to-do list.* If you have been feeling overwhelmed, sit down and make a list of to-do things, ranking them in priority. Getting your tasks down on paper gives you a clearer idea of what is or is not essential.

65. *Brighten up your wardrobe.* Forget about the sober blacks, dull grays and boring browns. Observe yourself brightening up when you wear clothes with colors.

66. *Simply smile.* With a guide on 17 types of smiles, you can't go wrong. So look into the mirror and give yourself a wide smile. Go ahead, you deserve it!

67. *Book a healing session.* Maybe it is Reiki or crystal therapy. Whatever the healing modality is, feel revitalized after a session of energy healing.

68. *Reconnect with a family member.* It's time to rebuild the relationships that have been estranged by time and distance. Call a family member to reconnect. Set aside past grievances for inner healing.

69. *Create affirmation cards.* Putting your affirmations on cards can make great reminders. Flipping through them at a later stage also reinforces your commitment for self-care

70. *Create a Vision Board.* Create a vision board for self care. Cut and paste pictures of you and the aspects of self-care that you intend to focus on.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

The caregiver tips and suggestions listed below do not come from just one source. They are pearls of wisdom and practical suggestions that have evolved from the collective experience of family and professional caregivers over time.

- Give yourself unceasing credit for what you are contributing to the life of the individual for whom you are providing care. Whether or not you are a caregiver out of love or obligation you are undoubtedly adding a dimension of quality and dignity to the person's existence that might not otherwise occur.
- Keep track of your own physical and medical well being.
- ~~Avoid using drugs and/or alcohol as a remedy, or as a replenishment for fatigue.~~
- Avoid unrealistic expectations of yourself, the person for whom you are caring, and others who assist with care. Have the courage to be imperfect.
- Whenever possible, get a minimum of six hours sleep a night
- Take some time each day, if possible, to write down your thoughts and feelings about caregiving in a journal. List problems and successes as well as short-term and long-term goals. Keep them realistic.
- Develop and maintain regular, planned events that are pleasurable and relaxing. Give yourself an opportunity for self-renewal.
- Never feel guilty about taking time for yourself, even if your loved one is unable to do so.
- ~~Be prepared to reach compromises with your time and effort as well as that of the person for whom you are caring.~~

- Allow yourself to find the humor in caregiving, and seek ongoing contact with friends and others who are upbeat, and who will listen to you when you need a boost.
- If your loved one is mentally and emotionally capable, take a risk by sharing some of your thoughts and feelings about what is happening in an honest, but respectful way. Come to some agreement about each other's limitations as well as strengths. Learn to share your fears, and most importantly, learn to share your hopes.

Caregiver Consortium

*"MY CANDLE BURNS AT BOTH ENDS; BUT, AH, MY
FOES, AND OH, MY FRIENDS; IT CASTS A LOVELY
LIGHT"*

-Edna St. Vincent Mallay