

If you are caring for a loved one with memory loss, chances are you have countless responsibilities.

You probably spend a lot of time making sure they are safe, well nourished, clean, and getting the medical attention they need. At the end of the day, you may find that there is little time left for you. You may also find that, in addition to sometimes not getting enough sleep, you are experiencing stress and anxiety. Caregiving can take a toll and may lead to “caregiver burnout” if the caregiver does not also focus on their own health and well-being.

Here are a few hints that may help you better care for yourself so you can be healthy during your caregiver journey. And remember – it’s not selfish to care for yourself – it’s necessary!

WE CARE

We hope that these tips help you to make sure you take care of yourself as you are caring for someone else. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please call the Care2Caregivers helpline. Our dedicated, professional staff members have also been family caregivers, and they are here to listen and guide you.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to the elderly since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health. Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

HELPLINE: 800.424.2494

RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

SELF-CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

**Taking care of
yourself is
important too**



RUTGERS HEALTH

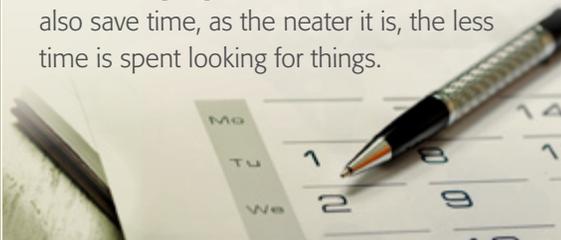
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1

Admit that you need help ... and then ask for it

You've probably heard the expression, "If there's anything I can do to help, just ask." But do you take advantage of these opportunities for support?

A friend or family member may be able to relieve you for a few hours, or even a few days, but **you need to ask**. If finances permit, **hire an aide** to help with day-to-day care, or a housekeeper to clean and cook. **Explore county programs** that might give you financial help based on income. Or **utilize respite care** at your home or a local facility. Enrolling your relative in a **Day Program** is a good idea for both of you; they get a stimulating day, and you get time to do what needs to be done. Take advantage of programs like **Meals on Wheels**, or ask your church or synagogue if they have volunteers to visit. **Having a friend do small errands** like running to the Post Office, pharmacy or dry cleaners can give you valuable time so that you can concentrate on the important care of your loved one. Try to **keep yourself organized** with a big calendar that shows important appointments and commitments, and who is doing what when. **Keeping the house in order** can also save time, as the neater it is, the less time is spent looking for things.



2

Watch for your own physical needs

There are times when the caregiver actually becomes sick, because the demands of caregiving leave them little time to care for themselves. Making sure you are **eating a healthy diet** and **staying hydrated** can support your good health.

Exercise will not only keep your body healthier, but will release endorphins, and perhaps brighten your mood. If you are able to leave the house, go to a gym or take a walk around the park. Even if you don't have outside help, you can do chair exercises with your loved one at home.

Try to get enough **sleep**. If Mom naps during the day and then keeps you up all night, and you can't change her schedule, then you need to nap when she does so you have enough energy to take care of her needs. If you find yourself not feeling well, or fighting depression, reach out for help.

Don't ignore signs of caregiver burnout which may include weight gain, sleeplessness, irritability, or depression. If you notice these or other physical changes, tell someone. You don't have to go it alone.

3

Get connected

If you are able to leave your loved one, take advantage of this time.

Go do something for yourself that connects you to other people. Isolation can be very depressing. Look for a nearby **support group** for caregivers. You will meet like-minded people who are also struggling, and pick up some valuable information along the way.

Go to the **library, movies**, anywhere that you will see others, so you don't feel the loneliness that comes with being a caregiver. If you simply can't leave the house, **invite someone over**. Even short visits can help you avoid the heartache of going through this journey alone. Or **reach out and call someone** on the phone. If you are comfortable with the computer, there are many ways to **connect with others online**.



800.424.2494

ubhc.rutgers.edu/services/geriatric
www.Care2Caregivers.com

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