

Why Self-Care Matters for You and Your Loved One

Imagine that caregiving is like a play. You and your loved one are the stars. Other family members and your loved one's care team play supporting roles. The different scenes include doctor's appointments as well as the interactions you have with your loved one and everyone else.

For this play to go on, everyone needs to be healthy. So a big part of your caregiving experience involves taking care of your own physical and mental health.

The phrase "self-care" might make you think of unnecessary or selfish activities. But having a good self-care routine affects more than just your own health and well-being. It will also benefit your loved one also. Here's how.

Self-Care Helps You Avoid Burnout

As a caregiver, you have to invest in self-care, starting in the broadest sense. It's so easy to get lost in a round-the-clock role – which can leave you feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and even burned out. You need a good balance between your health and your loved one's. When you're under constant pressure and not taking care of yourself physically and mentally, burnout can creep up on you.

Feeling tired, angry, or overwhelmed can be [signs of burnout](#).

If you can't remember the last time you felt happy or did something just for you, you're overdue for a little "me time." Self-care doesn't have to be involved. It might mean watching your favorite movie, riding your bike, or going to bed early. Self-care is about making time every day for little things to focus on your own health.

Self-Care Can Improve Your Relationship with Your Loved One

As a caregiver, you may find that although you're with your loved one a lot, your time with them isn't spent on fun or pleasurable activities. And when you're not with them, you might be thinking or worrying about them. Your caregiving role might take up a huge part of your life and brain space, and some days, you may find yourself resenting that.

No one does their best communicating when they're stressed out. When you're overwhelmed, you might find that your temper is shorter. You might notice you and your loved one clashing over little, unimportant choices. A disagreement about what socks your loved one wants to wear probably isn't about the socks. It might be about you feeling like they're taking up too much of your time or feeling annoyed they won't let you choose the socks so you can move to the next task.

A [better self-care routine](#) can actually help improve your relationship with your loved one – and keep the small day-to-day challenges from becoming total blowouts. Simply put, you need to take time to rest and recharge. You need time in your schedule to focus on yourself, instead of only (or mostly) on your loved one. When you make self-care a priority, you may be able to lower your overall stress level and develop calming habits that can help you in tough moments.

Caregiving will change the relationship you have with your loved one, but it doesn't have to ruin it. Taking time for yourself can help you appreciate time spent with your loved one even more.

Self-Care Can Help You Be a Better

Caregiver

The bottom line is that self-care can help you be a better caregiver. You've probably heard things like "You can't help someone else until you help yourself" or "You can't fill someone else's cup if yours is empty." Although these may be clichés, there is some truth to them.

When you aren't feeling your best, you can't provide your best care to your loved one.

Being burned out can leave you feeling tired, short-tempered, and even resentful. Although setting time aside for self-care might feel selfish or self-indulgent, it can help you feel better, have a more positive outlook, and live a healthier life.