



Tips for Family Caregivers

As a caregiver, finding time for positive, nurturing interactions with others might seem impossible, but you owe it to yourself to find time for you. Without it, you may not have the mental strength to deal with all of the emotions you experience as a caregiver, including guilt and anger. Give yourself permission not to be perfect...you're doing the best you can.

- **Do activities that give you pleasure** even when you don't really feel like it. Listen to music, work in the garden, engage in a hobby--whatever it is that you enjoy.
- **Pamper yourself.** Take a warm bath and light candles. Find some time for a manicure or a massage.
- **Practice "Healthy Living."** Eat balanced meals to nurture your body. Find time to exercise even if it's a short walk everyday. Do the best you can to sleep at least 7 hours a night.
- **"Laughter is the best medicine!"** Buy or borrow a light-hearted book or rent a comedy video. Whenever you can, try to find some humor in everyday situations.
- **Keep a journal.** Write down your thoughts and feelings. This helps provide perspective on your situation and serves as an important release for your emotions.
- **Arrange a telephone contact daily.** This can be with a family member, a friend, or a volunteer from a church or senior center so that someone calls each day to be sure everything is all right.
- **Seek support from other caregivers.** Join a support group. Seek out people who are going through the same experiences that you are living each day. If you can't leave the house, many Internet services are available. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- **Draw strength from your faith.** A congregation in a church or synagogue can provide the encouragement you need to feel good about your care giving role, and may also be able to provide a break from time to time.
- **Trust your instincts.** Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
- **Watch for signs of depression.** If you feel overwhelmed with feelings of despair and depression, seek professional help when you need it.
- **Take frequent respite breaks.** Care giving is a job and respite is your earned right

Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.