

# Avoiding the Caregiver Crunch

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If you are caring for a loved one, over time, you may find yourself feeling stretched thin with all of your responsibilities. In fact, research suggests that elder caregivers will spend more time tending to older loved ones than caring for their own children. Therefore, it is important to carve out time for yourself and avoid caregiver burnout. This article has ideas for how to make sure that your caregiving responsibilities are sustainable in the long-term.

Take time out for you. With so much energy going to other people, it's easy to forget about yourself. Many caregivers feel guilty for enjoying themselves, but interests, hobbies, and plain old fun can actually help you relax and recharge so you can provide the best care. Be sure to establish boundaries and hold firm on them so that when you're taking some "me" time no one interrupts.

Get support. Need a break? Ask a relative to take over for a day or look into community respite services that can help lighten your load. Connect with others in a similar situation by joining a local caregiving support group or an online forum. Remember: you don't have to go it alone. Support is out there.

Know that good health equals good care. To give the best care, you need the best you. Stay emotionally and physically healthy by getting enough rest and eating a well-balanced diet. Squeeze in exercise whenever possible to boost your energy and mood, and to shed stress.

Plan it out. Shave time off running errands and daily tasks by getting organized. See if your local grocer or pharmacy delivers and pays bills online or through pre-authorized payments. Hold a family meeting and create a chart that assigns chores to every member. Simplifying a hectic schedule can go a long way in easing anxiety and your time crunch.

Being a caregiver is challenging and, at times, taxing. However, the rewards of caring for someone you love can often outweigh these demands. Be sure to look after your own emotional and physical wellbeing so you're able to invest the strength needed to provide the best care to your loved one. After all, this might be the most important job you ever have.

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