**CAREGIVER SELF-CARE: CARING FOR YOU**

*By Family Caregiver Alliance*

***The care you give to yourself is the care you give to your loved one.***

Keep these simple steps and strategies in mind to ensure that you as a caregiver find time and resources to take care of yourself.

* Learn about the disease your loved one has. Find out about what is happening now and what will happen in the future with this disease. The more you know, the more you will be able to plan.
* Use community resources. The more you let these services help you, the less you have to do. There are places to get help:
  + Your local Area Agency on Aging
  + Paratransit
  + Meals on Wheels
  + Day care programs
  + Support groups
* Take a break from caregiving. Make a date to go to the movies, take a walk, meet a friend for lunch. Everyone needs to get out of the house once in awhile. Do something not related to caregiving.
* Get support. Attend a support group, have a buddy you can call just to let off steam and complain. Depression is treatable. Talk to your doctor about it. Or seek counseling.
* Practice communication and behavior management skills if you are caring for someone with dementia. This will make your job easier. Learn how to do this by taking a class or researching online. The best communication strategies are often not intuitive.
* Relax. Read a book, meditate, pray, garden, knit, get a massage, take a long bath.
* Take care of your health. Go to the doctor, get routine exams and flu shots, get enough sleep, and eat your fruits and vegetables.
* Ask for and **accept** help when offered. No one can do this alone.
* Change “guilt” to “regret.” Guilt is you did something wrong, regret is that you are in a difficult situation and sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, but they are not wrong.
* Forgive yourself—often. You cannot be a perfect caregiver, all day, every day.
* Laugh. Find ways to keep your sense of humor on a daily basis. Watch comedies, practice laughter yoga, share jokes with friends.

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