



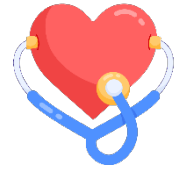
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AS A CAREGIVER

Your role as a primary caregiver demonstrates the love, compassion, and empathy you have for others, especially your loved one with special needs. While it is fulfilling and rewarding to provide on-going care for your family member, juggling home and work life requires being flexible and making sacrifices to meet your responsibilities. Sometimes, it can take a toll on your health and well-being, if you do not take the time to care for yourself, too.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR OWN HEALTH

Your resilience is commendable. But when there is a lot on your plate, the strain and stress can show in many ways, such as:

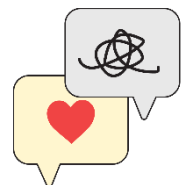
- Feeling disconnected or lonely
- Feeling hopeless, sad or losing interest in activities you enjoy
- Feeling overwhelmed, exhausted or anxious
- Becoming easily impatient or angry
- Misusing alcohol or drugs (including prescription medication)
- Having frequent pain, headaches or other physical ailments
- Lacking sleep, having trouble sleeping, or oversleeping
- Lacking enough time to prepare healthy meals or exercise



If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, find ways to minimize stress and do not wait until you are overwhelmed and burnt-out to seek help.

IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP

Many times, we do not ask for help to avoid being a burden or admitting that we cannot do it all ourselves. Asking for and receiving support are healthy ways to lower your stress and improve balance in your life.



While family and friends may be your starting points, try other sources of support:

- Your doctor can give advice on your physical and mental health, including providing information on support groups, community resources, and caregiver assistance.

- A mental health professional can assist you if you feel depressed, frustrated or anxious. Visit the [Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health](#) for more information and locations and providers near you.
- The [Los Angeles County Aging & Disabilities Department](#) can provide information on community resources and how to access them.
- The [California Department of Developmental Services](#) and your [local Regional Center](#) can help with respite care and find other support networks and community resources.
- The Department of Public Social Services can provide assistance if you are having financial hardships. You may also qualify for in [Home Supportive Services \(IHSS\)](#)
- Your faith community can lend guidance and may host caregiver support groups.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Caring for yourself is just as important as caring for others. When you take time for yourself, you are making yourself be a better caregiver. There are many ways – big and small – that you can do to boost your strength and stamina while lowering your stress:



- Stay active by exercising (e.g., walking, jogging/running, etc.), dancing or gardening.
- Eat healthy foods and drink water every day.
- Get at least seven hours of sleep nightly.
- Try relaxation techniques (e.g., meditation, yoga, etc.) to reduce stress.
- Maintain social connections.
- Enjoy hobbies that help keep your mind active and fulfilled.
- Plan breaks and schedule time off.
- Ask for support from a family member, friend, or mental health professional.
- Be kind to yourself and know that you are not alone. You are doing the best you can – and you are appreciated for making a difference in someone else's life.

SUPPORT THE CAREGIVER

You may not be the primary caregiver but can see how much it affects that person. By lending a hand, your support can go a long way in helping the caregiver find balance and lowering their stress. Here are ways you can help:



- Lend an ear and provide emotional support.
- Assist with specific tasks or chores (e.g., help with dishes, fold laundry, shop for groceries, etc.).
- Stay with the special needs individual for a few hours per week, so the caregiver can get some personal time.