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I Feel Like A Rockstar  
Every Morning



## Feature Article

### Finding Time For Yourself

Being a caregiver can be a 24/7 job, which makes it difficult to find time for yourself and for the things you like to do. Many caregivers struggle with feelings of guilt or selfishness when taking time for themselves. Practicing care and compassion toward yourself is an important— and sometimes difficult—skill to master.

It is important to have “me time” in order to refresh and rejuvenate yourself. Doing something that excites you is energizing and will give you a boost to carry you through more difficult days.

Here are some tips to create time for yourself, even with the busiest of schedules:

- **Schedule time for yourself in advance**

Treat this like a meeting (or **ME**eting). Just like you would be physically and mentally present for a certain amount of time with no distractions during a business meeting, do this for your scheduled self-time. If possible, try to schedule your “**ME**eting” for at least 30 minutes every day. During this time do something you find enjoyable and/or restorative and do not become distracted from this activity for 30 minutes.

- **Learn and implement different time-saving techniques**

These techniques don’t have to be difficult or very involved. For example, bypass that 5 minutes you look for your keys in the morning by designating a spot you put your keys every day when you get home. Keep other objects in places that you know you’ll look for them. Staying organized allows you to save time throughout the day, and in the end you’ll have more time for yourself.

- **Prioritize your to-do list. This will help you best utilize your time.**

Do the thing you’re dreading most first, and then your day will feel that much easier. If you find that some items on your to-do list are not urgent or necessary, and you are feeling drained, allow yourself to put off that task temporarily and enjoy some well-deserved free time instead.

- **Write a list of things you would like to do**

This list is not a “to do list,” it is a list of things you enjoy or want to do. On lighter days make it a priority to make time to cross these items off! These items should be seen as a priority because it is important to have experiences you look forward to and then look back on with joy.

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## Finding Time For Yourself

Feature Article (Continued from page 1)

### • Develop a routine you like that fits you

Start your day with a short amount of time focusing on your day or doing something you enjoy. This can be as simple as drinking a cup of your favorite tea or doing 10 minutes of yoga. Some parts of your routine will not be all fun, but getting in a habit of doing things a certain way (and scheduling in some fun time) helps make days enjoyable. Routines also provide a sense of control, which is something that we don't always feel we have as caregivers.

### • Don't feel guilty

Just to reiterate, caregivers shouldn't feel guilty about making time for and caring for themselves. It is your responsibility to take care of your physical and emotional well-being so that you can take the best possible care of your loved one.



## Nutrition for Busy Caregivers

Family caregivers are very busy people—so busy at times, that important things such as nutrition and adequate sleep often get put on the back burner. Many caregivers often feel overwhelmed and tired and don't take enough time to eat right. The best way for caregivers to increase their strength and energy levels for their busy day is through good, balanced nutrition. Making small changes can make a big difference, and the health benefits are worth the effort. Consider these basic nutrition tips for caregivers for some simple ways to get started:



### 5 healthy eating tips for caregivers

#### 1 Break for breakfast

We've heard it all before that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and it really is true. The body needs fuel and the right balance of nutrients to begin a busy day. Breakfast can be simple and does not have to be a stove-cooked meal, especially for those on a time constraint. Try a bowl of bran or whole grain cereal with sliced banana, or a bowl of 1-minute oats topped with a dab of honey and cinnamon, dried cranberries and sliced almonds. A small serving of orange juice also provides a great boost, along with the main meal.

#### 2 Have a healthy snack

Small snacks between meals are a simple and smart way to keep up energy levels. Something as basic as an apple, a handful of unsalted nuts or a stick of string cheese with a few crackers can go a long way to keep up with an action-packed day.

#### 3 Stay hydrated

Drinking water throughout the day is a critical part of keeping the body nourished and energized. For an added burst of light and refreshing flavor, try adding a few slices of orange or cucumber to your water.

#### 4 Accept help from friends and family with meals

Don't be afraid to ask for a little help. Setting up a dinner drop-off a couple of times a month is a very helpful way to ease the caregiver schedule and provide a break.

#### 5 Cook by the batch

Cook a box of pasta and top with your favorite sauce and sauteed veggies. Save the left-overs to have for lunch during the week. The same can be done by making a batch of chicken or tuna salad.

A caregiver who takes the time to eat healthy meals during the day is much better equipped to manage the daily demands of their dedicated role.





# Tips to Detect and Prevent Caregiver Burnout



Caregiving can be a rewarding but demanding way of life. Sometimes it's easy for the caregiver to put aside his or her needs in the process of caring for a loved one. Without making the time to rest, relax and rejuvenate, the many stresses of caregiving can build up to a point where it's difficult to do anything—let alone care for a loved one. Making the time to attend to your own physical and mental health is just as important as making sure your loved one takes her medication or gets to his appointment on time. Self-care plays a big role in avoiding burnout.

## What is Burnout?

Burnout is a term used to describe exhaustion and lack of interest in work or responsibility as a result of chronic stress.

## What are the Signs and Symptoms of Burnout?

Some signs and symptoms of burnout are:

- Anxiety, depression, and/or irritability
- Feeling tired even after resting
- Cutting back on leisure activities
- Increased feeling of resentment
- New or worsening health problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Neglecting other responsibilities

## How Can I Prevent or Remedy Burnout?

- **Give yourself time to relax daily:** Schedule at least 30 minutes a day to do something relaxing and rejuvenating for you. This could be anything from sitting on the couch reading a book to going to get a pedicure.
- **Accept offered help:** When friends or family members offer to help in any way, accept their offer and give them something easy to do. Even a small task can lighten your load.
- **Find meaning:** It's important to have other activities to turn to that are meaningful to you. Learn to meditate, join a club, find a new hobby, pick up an old hobby, or try anything that you feel drawn to.
- **Accept your feelings and talk about them:** Sometimes we resist our feelings because we feel guilty about having a certain emotion or feeling a certain way. Instead of feeling guilty about your emotions, accept that caregiving is difficult and that you are human. Acknowledge your feelings and talk to a trusted friend, family member, or counselor about them. Talking can be energizing and a very effective way to release stress.
- **Make time to stay healthy:** To take best care of your loved one, you have to make sure you are mentally and physically healthy. Eating nutritious meals, getting enough sleep, seeing a doctor regularly and exercising are all a part of maintaining your health. Even a small amount of exercise can give you a boost of feel-good hormones!
- **Grow your support network:** Having a strong support network to fall back on is useful and can bring peace of mind. Grow your support network by becoming a member of a support group, joining an advocacy group, or participating in a social group for caregivers (it's good to know you're not alone). For those unable to travel, online caregiver groups can also provide relief and support.
- **Have a social outlet and don't stop doing things you enjoy:** Don't give up activities that are important to you. Find a way to incorporate them into your life. It is important to build and keep connections with other people who can bring joy into your life.
- **Take advantage of resources:** Some communities offer care services, adult day care, or homecare. Research resources in your area and take advantage of these services so you can rest and recharge yourself.
- **Watch for signs of depression and anxiety:** If you see signs of depression or anxiety developing in your daily routine, talk to a friend, loved one, and/or counselor.



## Words of Wisdom

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart."

-Helen Keller

"Things turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out."

-Jack Buck



## Featured Caregiver Story

Shield Healthcare would like to introduce our Featured Caregiver Story. Each of our quarterly newsletters will feature one true story about caregiving. Below are Keshia's thoughts and experiences about the rewards of caring for her uncle.

"I feel like a rock star every morning when my uncle greets me with a chorus of shrieks, giggles and smiles. I've been caring for him for 19 months and have yet to regret my decision to take him in. Every day isn't easy, in fact most are hard, but every day is rewarding.

Two years ago in a span of six months I lost my mother and grandmother and inherited my uncle. I was 26. My uncle has cerebral palsy and an intellectual disability and cannot walk, or speak. He is though, very expressive. He's a fun-loving guy, a goof ball, and a shameless flirt. My uncle is an up-lifter, a mood changer, a motivator. He is the one person who broke through my grief and gave me a reason to smile. Whether I liked it or not, I had to drag myself out of bed to care for him so there was no time to mope about.

Although I grew up in the same home as him, I realized quickly that there was a lot I didn't know about his needs. His doctor has helped me navigate these issues and although I'm still learning, I feel confident that I am providing the best care possible. I'm even beginning to decipher meaning in the many noises he makes.

I have actually benefited from his presence more than I expected. His upbeat demeanor has rubbed off on me and I'm a more kind and patient person than before. Also, since my uncle is only 11 years older than me, I have made healthy changes in my life so I can be around to care for him as long as he needs me.

Yes, there are mornings I don't want to get out of bed when he calls for me but as soon as I reach his bedside his huge grin makes me glad to be there. There are other times when I lament having to give up my career but watching him experience things he wouldn't in a nursing home makes my sacrifice worth it."

"I feel like a **rock star** every morning..."



Keshia and her uncle

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Caregiver Connections Newsletter

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