

CAREGIVER SELF-CARE TIPS

Being a caregiver can be extremely rewarding, but also very challenging. Most caregivers immediately put their own feelings and needs aside, however, it is important to remember that you will not be able to help your loved one if you do not first help yourself. Here are some tips on self-care that may be helpful during this time.

FIND YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

When a friend or loved one is diagnosed with cancer, it can be an emotional time. Many find that talking to other caregivers who are also coping with stress, uncertainty, or loneliness helps them feel supported.

GATHER INFORMATION

There is truth to the phrase “knowledge is power.” Visit our website, www.sharsheret.org, to learn more about your loved one’s cancer diagnosis and treatment options.

RECOGNIZE A “NEW NORMAL”

Patients and caregivers alike often report feeling a loss of control after a cancer diagnosis. Learning how to manage this loss of control and care for your loved one will lead to a “new normal”—a new understanding of what your life is like now. It may also help to acknowledge that your home life, finances, and friendships may change for a period of time. Try to manage each day’s priority as they come.

RELIEVE YOUR MIND, RECHARGE YOUR BODY

Mini-breaks are an easy way to replenish your energy and lower your stress. Try simple activities like taking a walk around the block, closing your eyes for 10 minutes in a comfortable chair, or meditation. Taking time for yourself is not selfish, it is necessary. Seek ways to rejuvenate your spirit. Feeling spiritually connected can provide comfort and may also help you to put your situation into perspective.

TAKE COMFORT IN OTHERS

Many caregivers feel a loss of personal time over the course of their loved one’s illness. Keep in mind that while you are taking on new and additional responsibilities, you are still allowed a life of your own. You will need your friends and community to give you support as you support your loved one.



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PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

While planning may be difficult, it can help. Try to schedule fun activities on days when your loved one is not feeling the side effects of treatment. You can also give yourselves something to look forward to by planning together how you will celebrate the end of treatment, or a portion of treatment. It is also important to plan for the possibility of losing your loved one. All of us, whether we have been diagnosed with cancer or not, should have in place necessary paperwork such as healthcare agent, power of attorney and a will. Having essential paperwork under control will allow you to have some peace of mind.

ACCEPT A HELPING HAND

It is okay to have “helpers.” In fact, you may find that learning to let go and to say “YES!” will ease your anxiety and lift your spirits. Keep a list of all caregiving tasks, small to large. That way, when someone asks, “Is there anything I can do?” you are able to offer specific choices such as bringing over a meal or even an item like paper towels.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR HEALTH

In order to be strong for your loved one, you need to take care of yourself. Be sure to tend to any physical ailments of your own that arise as well as get regular checkups and screening, try to eat well, and get enough sleep.

CONSIDER EXPLORING STRESS-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

You may find that meditation, yoga, listening to music, or simply breathing deeply will help relieve your stress. There also are mind-body (or stress-reduction) interventions that use meditation, guided imagery, and healing therapies that tap your creative outlets such as art, music, or dance.

DO WHAT YOU CAN, ADMIT WHAT YOU CAN'T

No one can do everything. It's okay and important to acknowledge your limits. Come to terms with feeling overwhelmed (it will happen) and resolve to be firm when deciding what you can and cannot handle on your own. Your loved one needs you. You cannot do this alone. Together, and with Sharsheret's support, you can get through.