

## CAREGIVER SELF-CARE



For those of us who have families or loved ones we care for on a daily basis, we understand the challenges that is incorporated with that care. The overwhelming feelings that you are on a constant roller coaster ride, which may make you feel worn down and exhausted. We encourage you to take this time to begin a journey into your own mental health and wellness. Modeling self-care as a priority, ensures mental wellness with all parties in this process.

**TAKE A DAY TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE** - Everyone needs a break from something at some point in time. It is important to make proper arrangement to have someone take your place, even if it is for a few hours to allow you to get away and recharge. Some suggestions might be to go window shopping, go out to eat, meet a friend for coffee or take in a movie. Do whatever it is you want to do that will help you clear your mind, body and soul. Try to wipe the slate clean of your daily stresses.

Explain to your loved one that you need time away. Assure them you love and care about them, and in order to better care for them, you have to care for yourself. This is the start of building that trust between you and your loved one that everything will be fine while you are away. In addition to building that trust, it will also set boundaries in place that you must take time out for yourself.

**DOWNTIME FOCUS** – Focus on allowing yourself some downtime. Take time to relax, read or even debrief with yourself or someone you trust who is not a part of the daily happenings surrounding your role as a caregiver. Consider meditating. This is a practice that helps quiet the mind. Recuperative sleep is always helpful and can help reduce the effects of stress. Another suggestion to consider, is to take a hot shower or a soothing bath. Adding aromatherapy for extra comfort can help melt the stress away. Access your endorphins by exercising. Endorphins physically connect your body with an overall positive feeling. This allows your body to release this helpful chemical which is known to reduce perception of pain and stress.

**BUILD A SUPPORT TEAM** – Asking for help to assist with caring for a loved one can be a bit overwhelming. However, you are not the only one that is in a situation like this. There are people willing to help if they are just asked. When you ask an individual if they can assist with temporary care for your loved one, and you get a “yes”, make sure to ask “how long and how often they are willing to assist?” Set up communication with how to go about care for your loved one. It is important to talk about and go over steps in case of a crisis. This will put your mind at ease in case a crisis happens while you are away practicing self-care, now steps are in place and your support team knows the plan and routine.

**FIND YOUR OWN SUPPORT** – A caregiver support group is very helpful in allowing the caregiver to release their feelings and emotions in a healthy way. Support groups help a caregiver realize they are not alone. There are hundreds and thousands of other individuals that are experiencing something similar. [Click HERE for NAMI’s Family Support Group schedule.](#)

**TAKE TIME OUT TO BREATHE** – Take a deep breath. Deep breaths can reduce stress. Deep breathing sends a message to the brain to calm down and relax. So, take a deep breath and reduce the tension and relieve stress. Inhale deeply, hold 1-2-3, exhale – whooooooh!!!!!!! Repeat!

Self-care is the most important part of caring for a loved one. If you are not at 100%, then your loved one may not be getting the best care from you. Remember.... You can’t pour from an empty cup.

**YOU’RE THE BEST!!!!!!!!!!**

NAMI McHenry County will be having a Self-Care WRAP Class, **Tuesdays, May 21 – July 9 ~ 6:00 -8:00 pm.** Contact [Tina Karaway \(815.308.0854\)](#) to register.