

# Conference on Aging

## Care Partner Self-Care Tips

Shared from IU Health

### 1. Make self-care a priority.

**“You can’t pour from an empty cup.”** A large percentage of care partners pass away before the person that they are caring for. One of the primary reasons is that they are so focused on providing everything their loved one needs, that they forget to take care of their own needs – doctors’ appointments, diet, exercise and social opportunities go by the wayside.

Self-care **DOES NOT** need to be time consuming or expensive. Make a list of activities that leave you feeling cared for and take less than 15 minutes, or try one of these:

- Drink a glass of water.
- Take a short walk around the block.
- Call a friend or relative.
- Breathe in a soothing scent – lavender, lemon, or eucalyptus.
- Turn on music that you love.

### 2. Don’t be afraid to get help.

Sometimes it is hard to ask for what you need. Learning to delegate can lighten the load so that you can focus on what is most important. Ask a relative who is far away to research a medication or service that might help you, hire a professional caregiver who can provide companionship and help to your loved one so you can take a break, enlist a neighborhood teenager to mow the lawn. Even letting go of small to-dos can help the ongoing to-do list feel more manageable.

### 3. Be realistic.

**“Just because you CAN do it, doesn’t mean you SHOULD.”** We are often our own worst enemies. We hold ourselves to a standard of perfection that isn’t realistic. Learn to ask yourself the question **“so what?”** If it doesn’t really matter, allow yourself to let it go.

As caregivers, we struggle to let go of the reins when it comes to getting outside care for our loved ones. NO ONE can care for them the way that you do. But professional caregivers can support your loved one in a way that allows you to step back and focus on the RELATIONSHIP rather than constant day to day care.

#### 4. Practice good self-messaging.

Stop to congratulate yourself when you do a good job. We tend to dwell on the negative. Make it a point to pat yourself on the back and you will see a shift in the way you feel about yourself and the person that you are caring for.

Look for silver linings in this time of pandemic. Are there things that you have been able to do that you wouldn't normally have time for? Have you learned a new skill or hobby? Keep a journal or calendar where you can list these things. Focusing on gratitude can shift your thinking from loss to abundance.

Laugh. Even if it is fake. Laughter is the cheapest medicine. It releases endorphins in our brain that trigger "feel good chemicals." And surprisingly our brain cannot determine whether the laughter is real or fake. So, fake it until you make it. Practice laughing in front of the mirror, seeing who can come up with the most outrageous belly laugh, or watch a comedy that makes you giggle.

#### 5. Stay social.

Although social engagement can be challenging during this time, staying connected to others is key in managing our moods, brain health, sense of purpose, and quality of life. Video conferencing, phone calls, outdoor distanced conversations or committing to a "pod" for social activity can help you feel connected. Finding volunteer opportunities that can be done from home and / or support groups can help you feel connected to the community.

Take time to do something fun TOGETHER. Caregiving can feel less stressful when you are also taking time to enjoy each other and participate in activities that you both like.

Presenting Partner:



Supporting Partners:



Contributing Partners:

