



Ten Tips for Caregiver Care

By Jo Cavanaugh

Caregiving is the most rewarding and loving thing that you can do for another person. Use these ten tips to make sure that you care for yourself during the process.

1. **Create space in your life.**

Make time for sports, music, crafts, exercise, reading, movies, a trip to the spa, or any other pleasure that you have. Start with a break of fifteen minutes a day and work up to eight hours a week. There is a time to rest and a time to work. By taking time to relax and doing something that brings you pleasure, you are increasing your productivity.

2. **Ask for help.**

Make a list of all of your tasks. Carry around a tablet and add to the list for a few days until you are comfortable that you have a comprehensive list. Score or grade the list by indicating on the list all of the things that you don't like to do or don't get done. Determine what activities are nice and what activities add health, safety, and joy to life. Remove any tasks from the list that don't provide payback in health, safety, or joy.

3. **Just say no.**

Say no to all special requests until you have the time, money, or resources to comfortably satisfy them. In the process of saying no, you will discover what has the highest priority for you. Your energy will be focused directly on what provides the most beneficial results. Everything else can be handled by others. You cannot be everything to everybody, nor should you want to be.

4. **Limit your business tasks.**

- Limit the hours when you answer the telephone.
- Use your voice mail to communicate when you are available by telephone.
- If you get more done in the morning, use that time to do your important projects.
- Limit the amount of time you are available for visitors in the office. Visits use your time and energy.
- Make all appointments on one day or at the end of the day.

5. **Build a support network.**

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encourage you. Support groups and people that you talk to should be fun, uplifting, and helpful. Look for support in every aspect of your life. Look at all of your life experiences as opportunities to share and find support. Be open to new experiences and new friends.

6. Pamper yourself.

Take a vacation or weekend retreat. What favorite thing have you delayed or postponed because you are caregiving? Get going and recharge your batteries. Find out what restores you, and schedule it into your life. If you are unable to take a full forty-eight hours, start with a few hours at a movie or a day spa. Develop your ability to pamper yourself.

7. Make time for exercise.

Incorporate a half-hour of exercise three times a week into your weekly schedule. You don't need a personal trainer, but you will exercise more frequently if you have an exercise buddy. Choose enjoyable physical movement such as dance or sports. Maybe something unconventional sparks your interest. What have you always wanted to try, if you only had time? Make time for two-stepping or hiking or roller blading. Go for it; your heart will thank you.

8. Make time for healthy meals.

Make it a priority to eat healthy. You will have more energy and be more productive when you take the time to recharge with nutritious food. Make it a game to see how you can improve your nutrition and find healthier treats and snacks. Do not deny yourself sweets or your favorite food; just learn how to eat foods that provide more energy and nutrients.

9. Make time for spirituality and self-growth.

Enjoy the beauty of art, literature, music, mathematics, science, or spiritual study. Visit the library and select books that are different from your normal reading. Seek out spiritual leaders or teachers that inspire you, and ask to be taught anew. Refresh your enthusiasm, gain a new perspective, or enhance your wealth of knowledge.

10. Commit to your self-awareness and self-care.

It is human nature to start a new goal and to work very hard at it for a few days, weeks,

or even more and then to lose interest or forget about the goal entirely. Recognize that the best way to take care of yourself is to continually renew your commitment to self-care. Do not give up because you have hit a slump in your motivation. Use that slump to learn more about what your "triggers" are.

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Jo Cavanaugh is the founder and CEO of CareSentials, Inc., a company dedicated to increasing the joy in caregiving and caregiver care. Look for more resources and information at <http://www.caressentials.com>.