



7 Ways to Look After Yourself as a Family Carer

By Holly Clarke, Boxnote

Being a carer may be spiritually rewarding, but it can also be mentally and physically exhausting. Most carers are pushed into this new role without any prior notice. Life as a caregiver can be especially hard if you already have your plate full -- taking care of someone else isn't easy when you have bills to be paid, a full-time job or children to take care of. It is, thus, that while juggling with life's many demands, carers completely forget about their own well being. Remember, no matter what, every person should be their biggest priority. Here are 7 ways to look after yourself as a family carer.

- **Never Let Guilt Creep In**

Caregiving is a time and energy-consuming process, sometimes with no indication of any light at the end of a very long tunnel. As a carer, you may sometimes feel disappointed with your own efforts. Your mind may play games and lead you to believe that you are not giving your best. This is when guilt creeps in. When this happens, do not let your mind win. The fact is you are already doing what most people might have outrightly refused to do. Give yourself credit. If you find your mind conquering your positive thoughts, consult a counselor.

“While broadly speaking dementia patients may present similarly, all dementia patients will have varying symptoms because the affected parts of the brain vary from one person to another.” says Jane Byrne at FirstCare.ie

- **Let the Built-in Frustration Come Out**

People often hold back and never let their emotions flow out through tears as crying is often mistakenly considered a sign of human weakness. Do not be guided by these age-old diktats that preach guff -- it is okay to cry. As a matter of fact, if crying makes you feel better and lighter, cry when you want to. You are not accountable to anyone and what you are doing is in itself a sign of staunch bravery -- tears won't make you weak.

- **Meditate**

As a carer, you must ward off any negative energy surrounding you. Start your day with meditation. Focus on all the good things you have that make you happy. Meditation will also help you chase away negative thoughts. It is quite likely that you already suffer from a paucity of time and thus, meditation is a good way to rejuvenate yourself as it only needs 10-15 minutes of your day.

- **Reach out to Others**

When entrusted with the responsibility of caring for a loved one, carers usually have myriad questions in their mind. The best way to get answers to all your questions is to reach out to people who have been in your position. Alternatively, you can always fall back upon the literature on the topic. Most local libraries have books on caregiving. Use them to make your life a little easier.

- **Stay Social**

With responsibilities burgeoning over from all sides, it is easy to forget that you too are human. While caring for someone else, do not cut yourself from the external world. Instead, stay connected. Talk to your friends, ask them to visit you, find some time to catch up with old buddies and go out for dinner every once in a while. Staying connected will help you stay positive.

- **Get at Least 8 Hours of Sleep**

You can care for someone else only if you are healthy. Compromising on your sleep can lead to severe repercussions. Studies suggest that carers are often prone to depression, diabetes, and other health disorders. While lack of sleep may not be a direct factor in this, depriving oneself of the mandatory 8 hours of good sleep definitely indirectly adds up to the mental and physical exhaustion.

- **Hire Help**

While you may want to do it all on your own, it is not going to be always easy. On days when you find yourself crumbling down, reach out for help. Ask someone else to cook for you on days you find yourself left with no energy. Similarly, it is okay to reach out to a friend and request them to cover up for you in the hospital if you have something important to take care of. If you think managing everything on your own is nearly impossible, consider hiring full-time help. There is nothing wrong about delegating work -- it does not mean you love someone less.

Caregiver stress is an actual thing. [Caring for someone else can take a toll on your emotional and mental well-being](#). Thus, always remember that it is okay to prioritize others, but not above yourself.

30 September 2019