



Respite a Must for Family Caregivers

Q: I've been caring for my elderly parents and have heard a lot about the stress that goes with family caregiving. I'm certainly feeling it. What do you recommend?

What you really need is respite. If you have siblings or your parents have close friends, they might be willing to step in and help you get away for a short time. If your parents are active in a church or synagogue, check to find out what programs and organizations they might have available that could help you. Your Area Agency on Aging also is a great source for help and information.

Finally, your parents could also consider a private caregiver. The local Home Instead Senior Care® office, for instance, hires CAREGiversSM to go into the homes of seniors like your mom and dad to provide companionship and other non-medical assistance such as meal preparation, light housekeeping, medication reminders, errands, shopping and a much-needed respite.

Finally, following are some things that could help out:

- **Take a break:** Make arrangements for any necessary fill-in help (family, friends, volunteers or professional caregivers). Take single days or even a week's vacation. And when you're away, stay away. Talk about different things, read that book you haven't been able to get to, take naps, whatever relaxes you and makes you happy.
- **Eat well:** Eat plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, proteins, including nuts and beans, and whole grains. Indulging in fast food and sugar as quick "pick-me-ups" also produce a quick "let-down."
- **Keep your medical appointments:** Make sure you get your annual check-up. Being a caregiver provides many excuses for skipping your necessary check-ups, but don't do it. A healthy you is worth more to your aging loved one than a sick, weak you.
- **Indulge:** Treat yourself to a foot massage, manicure, nice dinner out or a concert to take yourself away from the situation and to reward yourself for the wonderful care you are providing to your aging relative. You shouldn't feel guilty about wanting to feel good.
- **Work out:** Exercise and enjoy something you like to do (walking, dancing, biking, running, swimming, etc.) for a minimum of 20 minutes at least three times per week. Consider learning a stress-management exercise such as yoga or tai-chi, which teach inner balance and relaxation.
- **Meditate:** Sit still and breathe deeply with your mind as "quiet" as possible whenever things feel like they are moving too quickly or you are feeling overwhelmed by your responsibilities as a caregiver.

Information provided by: <http://www.caregiverstress.com/stress-management/relief-tips/respite-for-caregivers/#>

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