

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others: Removing the Barriers to Self Care

The caregiver's well-being is the foundation of care giving. The cares of your friend or family member depends on your ability to physically, emotionally and spiritually respond to their needs as well as to your own. Some of the more common barriers to self-care are based on myths about self-care. Simply put, self-care is about meeting your needs so that you are physically, emotionally, and spiritually ready to meet the needs of your friend or family members. There are no rules about self-care except it should help you to feel replenished, comforted, or relaxed. Below you will find some of the more common myths about self-care, methods of removing barriers to self-care, and things to consider as you take care of yourself.

Myths about Self-care:

Myth: Self-care means time away from your friend or family member.

Reality: Self-care can occur with or without your friend or family member present.

Myth: Self-care takes a lot of time.

Reality: Depending on the activity, self-care can take only minutes. Reading a morning meditation may only take minutes but the effect can last all day.

Myth: Self-care is something you must learn to do.

Reality: What brings you pleasure, enjoyment, relaxation or replenishment is unique to you. Choose what works for you and do it.

Removing the Barriers:

- *Adjust the schedule of your activity.* Daily routines are often changed by care giving needs. It may be time to select a new time and day to do your favorite activity.
- *Adjust the location of your activity.* Before you give up your lunch with friends, think about having friends bring lunch to your home. If possible, arrange to have someone sit with your friend or family member while you receive the support you need to continue caring.
- *Adjust the length of your activity.* A quick walk around the block will never replace the long walks you once enjoyed. However, that quick walk can help you meet your care giving challenges.

Taking Care of You:

- *Keep Familiar Activities:* This may not be the best time in your life to learn a new self-care activity. Think about things you did in the past that you enjoyed and do those things.
- *Keep Your Commitment to Yourself:* Plan to take care of yourself. Make the necessary arrangements needed or plan the activity at a convenient time.

- *Keep it Real.* There may be several activities that will never work in your care giving situation. Plan activities that will work for you.
- *Keep it Simple.* The more complex the activity, the less achievable it may be. Below you will find a list of simple activities that other caregivers have found helpful. Many can be done alone or shared with the friend or family member you are caring for.
- *Create your Sacred Space:* This could be a room, a table of things or a chair near a window. Create your space.

Time Alone

Shared Moments

Gardening/Walking

Listen to music

Exercise

Create a special meal or order take-out

Take a hot bath/shower

Create a memory album

Watch TV/movie

Work on a craft project

Meditate/pray

Watch a favorite movie

Receive a massage

Call a friend

Escape in a book

Take a walk in your neighborhood

Care giving can be very demanding at times. But caring for a friend or family member can also be one of life's most rewarding experiences. Time is needed to experience the reward and prepare to care again. A wise person once said, "you can't draw water from an empty well." This saying is true when applied to care giving. Self-care does not take a lot of time; neither does it have to be time away from your family or loved one. Self-care does take a commitment and an understanding that our bodies, like wells, need to be replenished in order to keep giving. Take time to keep your well filled.

This article was adapted from the following website: <http://www.caringinfo.org>.