

How Can I Care for Myself When I am Caring for Others?

Caring for others, whether it be a child or children, elderly parents, an ailing friend or all of the above can be exhausting. Physical energy is required to get through the day but it is often the emotional stress that takes its toll. So often the caregiver gets lost in the shuffle and forgets what flight attendants have told us for years:

"Put your oxygen mask on first before assisting your child."

Experiencing the physical and emotional exhaustion of caring for elderly parents, I appreciate the struggle that comes with wanting to do everything possible for them and knowing that you are not taking care of your own health and wellbeing.

The question to ask yourself each day is:

"What can I do for myself that will help keep me balanced, rejuvenated and healthy?"

When care-giving seems to take up your time and energy 24/7, you must be realistic with what you can do for yourself. It may be the small things that give you the most support. The following are just a few suggestions that may ease the feeling of overwhelm.

BREATHE. Square breathing can help relieve the anxiety that is often felt throughout the day: 1) Breathe in to a count of 4. 2) Hold for a count of 4. 3) Breathe out for a count of 4. 4) Hold for a count of 4. Repeat.

STAY HYDRATED. Keep a water bottle with you at all times. Water will keep you electrical, focused and may prevent stress eating. Adding a pinch of Himalayan salt to your water will increase your body's ability to stay hydrated. The Australian Bush flower essence, **She Oak** will assist fluid to get to the tissues in your body.

The Australian Bush Flower Essence, **Alpine Mint Bush** helps with the mental and emotional exhaustion and the weight of responsibility felt by care givers. It doesn't take away the job. It helps revitalize and renew your energy.

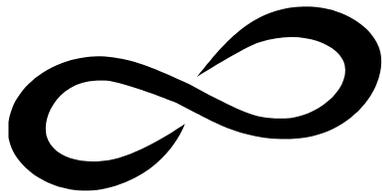


The Bach Flower Essence, **Rescue Remedy** can be added to your water bottle and give you emotional support throughout the day. Most health food stores carry the Bach flower essences.



Create a **support system**. You need a respite. This could be a friend or family member, a babysitter, a Home Health Aide, a support group, Elder Services, Visiting Nurses, etc.

- A simple energetic exercise can help you feel more focused and less overwhelmed:



On a piece of paper, draw a large **Infinity Symbol** (a figure 8 on its side) with your right hand. When the tracing is smooth, repeat the tracing with the pen in your left hand. When that is smooth, repeat the tracing holding the pen in both hands.

When the emotions of the situation feel out of control, take a moment to regroup with **Frontal/Occipital Holding**:



Place one hand on the back of your head and the other hand on your forehead. Breathe slowly and use this time to visualize yourself calm, healthy and balanced. When you feel pulsing under the hand on your forehead or you take a deep, cleansing breath, you are done.



ANIMALS are natural stress relievers. Just petting a cat or dog reduces blood pressure, minimizes anxiety and brings us back into the moment. If a pet isn't available, find pet videos on You Tube or Facebook. Animals, especially cute ones, can usually get us to smile and forget for a moment that we are overwhelmed.

There are many ways of putting your oxygen mask on first. Spend some time brainstorming the techniques that work for you. Be realistic, be willing to ask for help and give yourself permission to take care of you!

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