

# **COVID-19 CAREGIVER CHECKLIST #1 – SELF CARE TIPS**

## **Tip #1 - First, Care for Yourself**

Self-care is not selfish – it is a necessity! Only when we first help ourselves can we effectively help others. Caring for yourself is one of the most important—and one of the most often forgotten—things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too.

## **Tip #2 - Reduce Stress**

The stress you feel is not only the result of your caregiving situation but also other factors. It is important to remember that you are not alone in your experiences.

- Don't wait until you are overwhelmed. Know your own warning signs and act to make changes.
- Identify sources of stress. Sources of stress might be that you have too much to do, family disagreements, feelings of inadequacy, or the inability to say no.
- Identify what you can and cannot change. Ask yourself, "What do I have some control over? What can I change?" Even a small change can make a big difference.
- Take action. Taking some action to reduce stress gives us back a sense of control. Stress reducers can be simple activities like walking and other forms of exercise, gardening, meditation, or talking with a friend. Identify some stress reducers that work for you.

## **Tip #3 – Set Some Goals**

Setting goals or deciding what you would like to accomplish in the next three to six months is an important tool for taking care of yourself. Here are some sample goals you might set:

- Take a break from caregiving.
- Get help with caregiving tasks like bathing and preparing meals.
- Engage in activities that will make you feel more healthy.

## **Tip #4 – Ask for and Accept Help**

Reaching out for help is a sign of personal strength. Many caregivers are reluctant to ask for help. You may not wish to "burden" others or admit that you can't handle everything yourself.

Be prepared with a mental list of ways that others could help you. For example, someone could take the person you care for on a 15-minute walk a couple of times a week. Your neighbor could pick up a few things for you at the grocery store. A relative could fill out some insurance papers. When you break down the jobs into very simple tasks, it is easier for people to help.

Caregiving can be stressful and can pose new challenges during times of uncertainty. If you or your loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak, there are resources available:

- Get support by speaking to a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.
- Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health-related questions or to seek mental health support.
- Do things at home that have made you feel better in other stressful situations, such as reading, watching movies, listening to music, playing games, exercising, or engaging in religious activities.
- There are various options open to you for respite care while you care for a loved one. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-582-7277 for more information.

Sources:

Family Caregiver Alliance - <https://www.caregiver.org/Taking-care-you-self-care-family-caregivers>

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) - <https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-audience/family-caregivers>

*Wandering is a common behavioral effect of dementia. According to the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 60 percent of people with the condition will wander at some point. Answer True or False to the questions below.*

1. *Reducing noise and confusion, particularly at mealtimes, will not reduce the chance of wandering. T F*
2. *One of the most troubling aspects of Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is the person's tendency to wander away from home. T F*
3. *Finding out how the person with AD coped with change and stress and learning about patterns of physical exercise and lifetime habits, both at home and at work, can help you understand more about whether wandering was part of a previous lifestyle. T F*
4. *Some people with AD will turn around when they see their image in a mirror, not recognizing themselves. T F*
5. *If you can't prevent the person in your care from wandering, there are things that will make it easier for them to be found. T F*
6. *It will not make it any easier to find the missing person if you have saved unwashed clothing. T F*
7. *Spending more time on hobbies with a strong social network is a key factor in healthy aging. T F*
8. *Wandering may also be a natural release for boredom or agitation. T F*
9. *You cannot always prevent wandering, but you can do many things to reduce the chances it will happen. T F*
10. *If you are the authorized caregiver or a family member, you can register the person in your care with the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program. T F*

**KEY:** 1. F 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. F 7. T 8. T 9. T 10. T