

# Caring for You, Too: A Guide for Managing Caregiver Stress

Caregiving can feel rewarding but it can also feel stressful

**Caregiver stress:** the emotional and physical difficulties that can happen as a result of:

- Changes to your relationship with your loved one when you become a caregiver
- Demands on your emotional and physical energy, time, and finances

Check to see if you're experiencing any signs of caregiver stress:

Emotional signs	Physical signs	Coping signs
<input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed	<input type="checkbox"/> Not enough or too much sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Comparisons
<input type="checkbox"/> Irritable or easily angered	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Disengaging or numbing
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad or worried	<input type="checkbox"/> Tired	<input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol or drugs to escape
<input type="checkbox"/> Alone or isolated	<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Over-engaging
<input type="checkbox"/> Apathy	<input type="checkbox"/> Body aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-neglect

If you're experiencing signs and symptoms, you're not alone—

**60%** of caregivers experience moderate to severe caregiver stress.

Thankfully, strategies can help prevent and decrease caregiver stress by helping you manage demanding to-dos, practice self-care, and cope with difficult emotions.

**Manage demanding to-dos by:**

Breaking down large caregiving tasks into small steps. Schedule the steps for specific times and dates in your calendar. Practice below:

Large task:	
Small steps:	Time and date for each step:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Select specific demands from your caregiving to-do list to get help with. Using the list below as a starting point, check responsibilities you would consider entrusting to someone else and add any additional into the empty slots.

<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule appointments	<input type="checkbox"/> Pick up prescriptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Grocery shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Take out trash
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with doctors	<input type="checkbox"/> Give medications	<input type="checkbox"/> Cook	<input type="checkbox"/> Do dishes
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Pay bills	<input type="checkbox"/> Do laundry	<input type="checkbox"/> Change sheets
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist with feeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage fluid intake	<input type="checkbox"/> Aid in personal care	<input type="checkbox"/> Support exercise
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer emotional support	<input type="checkbox"/> Help with hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/> Organize social activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Consider sources of support (e.g., specific family, friends, or services such as respite services, grocery pickup, prescription delivery). Write ideas on the line:

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Why do it? Knowing how you will approach the demands of caregiving and/or having fewer demands on your time and energy can reduce stress.

## Practice self-care by:

Choosing activities that can help you:

Protect health	Decrease optional demands and increase time	Increase social connectedness	Increase pleasant activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise (walk, run, bike ride, swim, lift weights, or other)	<input type="checkbox"/> Look for opportunities to say no to incoming requests	<input type="checkbox"/> Look into support groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch a funny TV show or movie
<input type="checkbox"/> Cook nutritious meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a five-minute break	<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a walk with a friend or family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in nature
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare healthy snacks	<input type="checkbox"/> Audit your calendar and cancel optional activities you don't enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Connect over a phone or video call with a friend	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a bath
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for a regular bedtime and wake time	<input type="checkbox"/> See if you could do any tasks more efficiently, allowing for more breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for a meal or coffee with a loved one	<input type="checkbox"/> Eat a favorite food
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule and keep doctor's appointments	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider asking for help with a task	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider an online caregiver message board	<input type="checkbox"/> Read
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Identify self-care activities that fit in different amounts of time (e.g., two minutes: stretch your body; five to 10 minutes: eat a healthy snack; 30+ minutes: watch a funny TV show). Practice below:

Two-minute version is \_\_\_\_\_

Five- to 10-minute version is \_\_\_\_\_

30-minute (+) version is \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule your self-care activities for specific times and dates in your calendar. Tailor your reminders to prompt you that the activity is for your well-being and ultimately that of your loved one (e.g., “for me and mom”).

*TIP: Think about scheduling self-care during your caregiving time if there is overlap between the activities (e.g., cooking nutritious meals and eating healthy)*



Why do it? Self-care can help fuel you for the demands of caregiving and help you recover from them.

### Cope with difficult emotions by:

- Acknowledging the specific difficult circumstance prompting the emotion.
- Validating how you're feeling—reassure yourself that how you are feeling makes sense given what is happening.
- Feeling your feelings—give yourself permission to gently notice your feelings. Be curious, almost like a scientist observing what you feel.
- Observing your feelings as they are—notice any attempts to change feelings or distract from them. Allow yourself to be present with your emotions just as they are, without labeling them as good or bad.



Why do it? Meeting difficult emotions with understanding and acceptance can make them feel less overwhelming and pass more quickly.

Reach out for additional resources to support your wellness. Using strategies on your own can help, but reaching out to others can be an important part of coping with caregiver stress.

### Support groups:

- Help you connect with others who can empathize and offer practical tips
- Offer the opportunity to form meaningful friendships
- May be offered through specialty clinics or organizations for your loved one's condition
- Check organization websites for more information

### Consider individual professional support when:

You're finding it hard to function well at home, work, or in your relationships. But remember, you can reach out for support at any time. You don't have to wait until functioning feels challenging.

**Lyra is here to support you as you support your loved one.**  
Reach us at [care.lyrahealth.com](https://care.lyrahealth.com).