

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AS A CARER

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Do you find yourself irritable, a bit short with people, easily upset, regularly frustrated, sometimes tearful, tired, unable to enjoy life like you used to?

You may be needing to do some deliberate self-care.

I write deliberate or planned self-care because there's rarely time in the day for self-care in the multiple commitments that being a carer brings. Your diary will be full of appointments for those you care for, so add another appointment, one for you.

Look at your week, look at your day.

Decide on a day and time when you will just look after you. This could be really hard at first, but it's worth remembering that information when you were hearing the safety instructions on a plane (remember those days?):

'Adjust your own oxygen mask before assisting others.'

When googling this phrase, I found a website [smartrecovery.org](https://www.smartrecovery.org) that used this analogy too and I quote from them:

'To avoid burnout, managing our self-care is a key responsibility to maintain our happiness, our physical health, and our mental health. It requires consciously planning to include time in our day to attend to our own needs and make that time a priority. If we don't, we eventually won't be able to care for others.'

*'What do we really need to maintain our physical and mental health? Exercise, good nutrition, alone time, social time, time for creative endeavours, medical care, and support groups are just a few ideas to consider.'*¹

I would like to unpack some of these suggestions with a few ideas that you might find helpful.

1. Exercise - getting outside and going for a walk, doing a bit of gardening, trying online Pilates. Enjoying sunshine, fresh air and movement.



2. Good nutrition - eating regular meals, taking time to prepare food that you enjoy. Trying a new recipe can be fun.

3. Alone time - taking time to not be responsible for anyone just for a short while can be so restorative. Using that time to enjoy a book - try an audio book from your local library. It's a great way to get away without leaving the couch.

4. Social time - arranging a regular coffee or lunch with a friend helps us to feel connected. It can be a time to relax, enjoy a good laugh and catch up on others' lives.

5. Taking time for creative endeavours - taking up an old or new hobby. Try dancing, knitting, painting, restoring furniture, listening to music, using your hands in some way.

6. Medical care - taking time to get that appointment for a skin check or annual health check.

7. Join a support group - the Haemophilia Foundation in your state or territory usually has groups where there are others who share similar experiences to yourself as a carer. You can contact the counsellor or social worker attached to your Haemophilia Treatment Centre for general information or referral.

Check the HFA website www.haemophilia.org.au or phone them on 1800 807 173 for contact details of your local Haemophilia Foundation or Haemophilia Treatment Centre.

By taking time for yourself you will improve your individual wellness, mentally and physically, and enjoy all benefits that can help you to thrive. ■

REFERENCES

1. SMART recovery. Oxygen mask rule for family & friends. <https://www.smartrecovery.org/oxygen-mask-rule-for-family-friends/>. Accessed 19 May 2021.