



Self-Care for Caregivers

Tips for supporting your own needs while caring for your child in a stressful time

- **Schedule time for yourself.** Even when demands on your time seem overwhelming, it's worth it to make room for activities that bring you joy and meaning. They will leave you energized and fulfilled. Here are some options to consider when brainstorming ways to do something positive for yourself:
 - Service activities: Do something that helps others, like donating to food pantries, writing cards or support letters, or calling your local representatives to advocate for something you believe in
 - Fun activities: Do something for pure enjoyment, by yourself or with others
 - Social activities: Spend time with people who make you happy or meet new people
 - Mastery activities: Learn or build on a skill that will give you a sense of accomplishment
 - Physical activities: Engage in exercise, games, and/or sport
- **Take care of your physical needs.** Physical health has a direct impact on your mental health and ability to handle stress. Try to get 8 hours of sleep nightly. Eat regular, healthy meals. Stay hydrated. And go to the doctor as needed.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Your thoughts affect the way you feel and how well you respond to challenges. Pay attention to the way you talk to yourself in times of stress. Instead of criticizing yourself, remind yourself that you are doing the best you can, and there is no such thing as a perfect parent.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness, the practice of staying in the present, helps you stay calm and let go of troubling thoughts and emotions. Regular practice has been shown to reduce stress and support wellness. In difficult moments, try a simple mindfulness technique: focus on your breathing, counting each inhale and exhale slowly, exploring the sensation within your body.
- **Find support.** Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Lean on friends and family for child care when you need a break and some self-care. Remote parent support groups, particularly those that include others experiencing challenges similar to your own, can help reduce feelings of isolation and promote well-being. Seek mental health services if you need further support.