

## Caring for the Caregiver

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Being the primary caregiver for an older loved one is tough, and expectations are frequently quite high. With that said, there are ways to relieve some of the stress, and much of it revolves around a shift in your mindset. After all, each of us can only do so much before we simply break down! One of the keys to success for maintaining a positive caregiver lifestyle is to take time away from your responsibilities and make time for yourself. Truly try to be “in the moment” and simply enjoy a hobby or other activity that allows you to lose yourself and just let go.

Even if you have the best caregiver support system, on many occasions the needs of your loved ones will become incredibly demanding (at least that’s how it feels). By taking some time to recharge and de-stress, you’ll become a more pleasant and productive caregiver. Making sure you’re getting enough sleep, eating healthy and exercising are all essential elements of *caring for the caregiver*.

Here are a few more tips to keep in mind as you go through your caregiving journey:

1. **Develop a routine.** Each morning have a glass of water, some protein and engage in light [movement/exercise](#). This sets the right tone for each day and jump-starts your body.
2. **Find a hobby and really dig into it.** Whether you’re reading a book, at a Star Trek convention or tuning into “Mad Men,” completely immerse yourself into something that brings you simple joy.
3. **Slow down.** A recent [New York Times article](#) indicated that slowing down, contrary to what one might assume, helps you become more efficient. Clearly the *quality* of what you do is as important as the *quantity* of the things you accomplish.
4. **Eat right.** It’s amazing how junk food zaps your energy and healthy food fuels the body. Don’t be *too* strict – otherwise eating properly just becomes

another form of stress – just try to keep your [meals simple, nutritious and fresh](#).

5. **Ask for help.** You can't expect your friends and family to automatically offer to help. Speak up and communicate your needs. I recently recorded a video that will help you learn how to [ask your family members for help](#).
6. **Think quality.** Make the most of your time when you're caregiving. Try your best to be attentive and truly listen to your aging loved ones. Open lines of communication go a long way towards earning mutual respect.
7. **Utilize resources.** There are so many untapped products and services available to help ease caregiver stress – use them. They range from great caregiving blog websites such as [www.caresquad.com](http://www.caresquad.com) to products like the [VTech Careline™](#) phone, which will help enhance communication with your aging loved ones and provide a little peace of mind when you are not with them.

Be sure to recognize that you still may feel overwhelmed, even when you do implement these tips and other lifestyle changes. Gaining back control of your life often relates to having *meaning* in your days. Of course, this is easier said than done. So don't worry if you seem to be making positive changes more slowly than you'd like; they will all add up. The most important thing is to not feel guilty. You can't be everything to everyone. You must make *yourself* a priority!