

CAREGIVER CONNECTIONS



The Nebraska Respite Network works diligently to educate caregivers; those who are caring for a loved one with special needs, the importance of getting their breaks so that their health; mental, physical, or otherwise, will not suffer. Are you in need of a respite provider? Visit <https://nrrs.ne.gov/respite> to begin your search.

Take Care of You First!

John Schall, CEO of Caregiver Action Network

As a caregiver, you know how important it is to take care of your sick or elderly loved one. But what you might not know is just how important it is to take care of you first. The Theme for this year's National Family Caregivers Month is Take Care to Give Care. You need to take care of yourself to be strong enough to take care of your loved one.

Family caregivers are the ones holding everything together. So what happens if the caregiver gets run-down? Will they be able to provide their best level of care? If the caregiver gets the flu, will their loved one catch it from them? If the caregiver becomes depressed, will they be able to make their best decisions? If the caregiver gets sick, who will take over their caregiver role, whether temporarily or permanently.

Caregiving can be physically and emotionally demanding. But caregivers too often disregard their own health needs. Caregivers are at great risk of major health conditions like depression, diabetes and hypertension than non-caregivers — direct result of the stress from their caregiving challenges. And ignoring their own health (not properly eating, sleeping, exercising, visiting a doctor) further endangers a caregiver's health.

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How do you stay balanced? Caregivers have a unique set of needs in order to stay healthy. Trying to stay healthy yourself isn't easy when you are focusing all your attention on the person you are caring for. It is essential, however, that caregivers create a balance between caring for others and caring for themselves.

Caregivers need to pay attention to physical and emotional symptoms that can affect their own health and well-being. They need to guard against caregiver burnout and avoid becoming overly tired and exhausted, which can reduce the body's ability to ward off illness. There are many ways to stay vigilant

regarding your own health. Here are some helpful strategies to keep in mind if you're a caregiver. Practice these tips for a healthier mental and physical well-being.

- *Make regular doctor's visits and do not ignore possible symptoms of ill health.
- *Take a break from caregiving—respite time is crucial.
- *Get a flu shot.
- *Watch for signs of depression.
- *Have regular check-ups with your medical doctor, eye doctor and dentist.
- *Take a daily vitamin supplement.
- *Get some exercise and fresh air.

Family caregivers, out of loyalty and love, give so much. They often put their own lives on hold, put their own needs second, and put their own health in jeopardy to care for someone else. But ignoring your own health is not healthy for anyone, least of all a loved one who needs you to be healthy enough to care for them.

Check out the link at <http://support.answers4families.org/respite-providers/provider-calendar>. This calendar is accessible to both family caregivers and providers. Search for upcoming training dates by browsing this online calendar. Click on the training date to see more details for trainings and events. Check out the on-going training section for online opportunities.

SOME HEALTHY WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS FROM CAREGIVING

- *Use Adult Day Care services if available in your area. Often you can just drop in with your loved one and leave them in a safe place while you run errands, go to a doctor's appointment or just enjoy some time alone.
- *Spend some time with friends doing something fun or talk to them on the phone.
- *Step outside while your loved one is napping, enjoy the fresh air and enjoy a favorite beverage.
- *Take your loved one for a walk.
- *Sing in the church choir or while you work.
- *Take your dog for a walk.
- *Take deep cleansing breaths when you begin to feel stressed.
- *Listen to music.
- *Meditate.
- *Do an activity that gives you joy and relaxes you.
- *Arrange for your loved one's friend to come for a visit.
- *Make time to go to the gym or to do a favorite physical activity.

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A final word...

High Protein Healthy Snacks

- 5 oz. single serving of cottage cheese
- Hardboiled egg
- 1.15 oz peanut butter pack
- Mini-cheeses or string cheese
- Single serving of oatmeal packets or cups
- Tuna pouch
- Single serving of Greek yogurt
- Nutrition/Protein Bars
- Turkey breast slice rolled up with lettuce or tomato
- Low-fat Chocolate Milk single serving
- Hummus cup
- 100-calorie almond pack



"Stress relief techniques include meditation, slow breathing, and visualization of chocolate bars."