

SELF-CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER



Caregivers are in the unique position to offer encouragement, provide support and hold hope for their loved ones. However, as the adage goes, a lantern without oil cannot produce light. Caregivers need the tools and the guidance to stay the course. Practicing self-care, developing resiliency and knowing that recovery is possible will allow you to stay the course and to find renewed strength.

FIRST THINGS FIRST



Commit to getting enough sleep. Stick to a schedule.



Establish regular meals that nourish your body.



Make time for playful, enjoyable movement.



Stay connected with trusted family and friends.



Schedule regular doctor appointments for yourself.

Whether your loved one lives under your roof or miles away, it's important to practice self-care. Life doesn't need to be dominated by the day-to-day struggles with the eating disorder. Although it takes vigilance to stay the course, caring for yourself is a necessity. Consider creating a wellness plan. Start by reflecting on the following two questions.

- How has my life been impacted by my loved one's eating disorder?
- Where do I want to see my life and my relationship with my loved one?

ONGOING SELF-CARE

Periodically, throughout the day, focus your attention on positive experiences. Shift your attention so that you can reset and refill your emotional reserves. Although this requires daily intent and thoughtfulness, you will reap the benefits both mentally and physically. Eventually, your brain will automatically seek out these experiences. The goal is to gradually fill your life with positive experiences so that you have the capacity to show up each day to support your loved one while maintaining a healthy self. Commit to two weeks and experience the difference.

Check in with yourself each morning by completing the following:

- Naming one thing you are grateful for.
- Identifying one success from the previous day.
- Determining one thing you will do for yourself today.

Check in with yourself each evening by:

- Writing in a gratitude book.
- Journaling what you are grateful for and things you've noticed throughout the day that brought you curiosity and joy.
- Creating an exhaustive list each night.

BUILD YOUR OWN SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

- Go outdoors at least once a day. Take a walk, work in the yard, sit on the front stoop.
- Start a simple, enjoyable project. Create playlists, tinker in the garden, select a craft or hobby.
- Step away from social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc.
- Choose whom you spend time with. Be selective. Identify those who positively impact your life.
- Consider changing your phone's ringtone periodically.
- Designate times and places as no-phone zones.
- Refer to a calendar or app that offers daily warrior-type quotes.
- Vary your routine. Take different routes to work, appointments or activities.
- Switch the scenery in your home or at the office. Change the pillows or pictures. Rearrange the furniture.
- Try some new scents with new candles.
- Post sticky notes containing words of encouragement for yourself.
- Use a mug inscribed with a positive affirmation such as "You Got This."
- Wear a band or bracelet that offers words of encouragement.
- Reach out for help. Assign trusted friends with specific weekly tasks.
- Consider securing a therapist for yourself.
- Hold onto hope.

CAREGIVER AFFIRMATIONS

Recovery from an eating disorder is possible. Keep in mind that it takes time. Recovery is not linear; it is often three steps forward and two steps back. There will be days when doubt, disappointment or discouragement takes up residence in your head. We can only do our best. Supporting a loved one is a trial-and-error process. Stay the course. Refer to these affirmations as you continue to offer your loved one emotional and practical support.

It's okay to not be perfect.

If I don't get it right, I'll keep on trying.

I am conquering my own fears.

I can do hard things.

I've got this.

Mistakes are learning opportunities.

Each day I get stronger.

I can be a helpful resource for my loved one.

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By giving ourselves unconditional kindness and comfort while embracing the human experience, difficult as it is, we avoid destructive patterns of fear, negativity, and isolation.

– Kristin Neff, PhD

For additional resources, visit EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries
For more information or if you have questions, please email Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM