

How to Take Care of *You* with Positive Coping Strategies

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Caring for a person with dementia can be a challenging situation for family members. It can be isolating and lonely when you feel like no one else understands what you are dealing with. You may think you can't do anything right, and you're not sure what will happen from day to day, hour to hour, or even minute to minute.

With all the responsibilities of care giving, you may end up neglecting yourself. To cope with the stress, it is easy to resort to negative coping strategies; you eat too much junk food, neglect your exercise routine, and give up the activities that bring you joy.

How can you make changes for yourself and your loved one, so you don't end up sick, frustrated, and in constant conflict with the person you care for?

The most important point to remember is that your relationship with the person you love must come first. The person is still here, they're just different. They are living with brain changes and doing the best they can in any given moment. Does it mean that it is easy to accept the changes? No, it is not necessarily easy, and it's natural to want things to be the way they used to be. Unfortunately, you can't go back in time. The only solution is to learn some new strategies and techniques to help you cope. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

Deep breathing – Learn how to stop, take a deep breath, and back away from the situation for a minute. Deep breathing exercises can be done anywhere at any time and can be beneficial for both your mental and physical health.

Ask for help – Caring for a person with dementia requires a team. Don't be afraid to ask for help from family, friends, professionals, and people in your church or community. People often want to help but may not know what to do. Make it easy for them by giving them a specific task like cooking a meal or driving you to an appointment.

Learn as much as you can – Education is critical for yourself and other family members. Dementia is complex and there is a lot to learn. The more you understand about the brain changes that the person is experiencing, the better equipped you will be to help them make the most of their remaining abilities. Visit Teepa Snow's [website](#) for a variety of free resources that will get you started on your journey.

Stress management – Be sure to take time out for you. Caregiver burnout and exhaustion is very common. All too often, caregivers get sick because of the stress in caring for a person with dementia. It's important to manage the stress and to take time out, even if it is only 10 minutes. Sit quietly, soak in a warm bath, enjoy a cup of tea, cuddle a pet, spend time with a friend who listens well, and remember to laugh and smile.

Plan healthy meals – One of the most important things you can do is to eat healthy. Nutritious meals don't have to be complicated or time consuming to prepare. Stock up on lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and healthy sources of protein such as lean chicken breast, fish, beans, legumes, peanut butter, and almonds.

Exercise – Your body was built for moving, so get up and go! A 10-minute walk around the block is better than nothing at all. Do what you can to stay active.

Pay attention to your personality – If you rejuvenate by being alone, then seek solitude. If you rejuvenate by being with others, seek company.

Remember that you are not alone. Help is right around the corner. Reach out to others, and take care of both the person you love and yourself!