

Family Caregivers Need A Chance To Recharge Their Mind, Body and Soul

By Mary Lee, Outreach Coordinator & PAC Trainer

Do you or someone you know need a break from caregiving? Do **YOU** need a caregiver? Maybe you or someone you know deserves to **rest and recharge**.

In order to give care to another person, it is essential to be emotionally, physically, and spiritually replenished and recharged. If you are totally spent in any of these areas, compensating for the lack thereof only decreases the other areas that much faster. You can only give away what is yours to give.

“For five years my sweet mom, whose diagnosis was Alzheimer’s, lived with me, and I not only worked, but I was also her full-time caregiver. In order to be the best caregiver I could be for my lovely mother, who deserved my best, I took my own advice and scheduled small breaks from time to time from this life-challenge called “caregiving.” I would certainly advise a good friend to take a well-deserved and guilt-free rest, so why not do the same for myself.” – Lydia

Caregiver fatigue cannot be understated. According to Webster’s dictionary, fatigue means “physical or mental exhaustion; weariness.” Spouses, adult children, and family members alike are susceptible to caregiver fatigue whether they are providing care twenty-four hours a day or caregiving from a distance. The sandwich generation faces potential challenges as they attempt to provide care to elderly parents while juggling the demands of young families and fulltime careers. Whether caregivers are losing actual sleep or simply wearing down from the constant worry and obligations, help is needed before feelings of resentment and guilt set in or the caregivers’ health is compromised.

Here are some creative ways to reduce stress and recharge...

Meditation and Deep Breathing

Meditation, even a short session, can decrease anxiety and agitation, and increase our ability to step back from a stressful situation and keep it from dragging us down. Deep breathing is not only relaxing, it's been scientifically proven to reduce the stress hormone cortisol. Teepa suggests trying to take three deep breaths as a “time out” method before we lose our patience or react unkindly to those we are caring for.

Respite Care

The Mayo Clinic says, “taking a break is one of the best things you can do for yourself as well as the person you’re caring for.” Care partners not only need short breaks but a day or two when feeling really stressed. Consider contacting your county Office for the Aging or local Alzheimer’s Association and ask whether they have respite care available, such as adult day care or short-term facility stays. An in-home care aide would also be a good option.

Exercise

Physical activity is good for the body and the mind. And, if you're not the type of person who can sit still to meditate for even a few minutes, exercise can have some of the same beneficial protective effects on your brain's stress response. Plus, exercise releases natural endorphins in the brain which can reduce pain and improve mood. Exercise is not only good for you, but also the person you are caring for. Try going for regular walks or take your loved one with you to work with a personal trainer while you take a yoga class.

Sleep

A good night's sleep is one of the most basic things we need for our own health and well-being as caregivers—but it's often the most elusive. If your sleep is routinely disrupted by the person you are caring for, by stress and worry, or by a condition such as insomnia, it's important to take the time to get help. Sleep deprivation increases your risk for all kinds of health problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stroke, and dementia. Discuss with your doctor and try to nap when your loved one naps. Other options to consider are having someone stay the night occasionally or purchase a bed alarm that signals when they get up so you can sleep more soundly.

Seek Support

Social support can be just as important as setting aside ***me time***, whether it's the sympathetic ear of a good friend, the professional help of a counselor or support group, attending a bible study, or just time out of the house having fun. Social support in the form of a caregiver support group is a great way to share your troubles and find people who are going through the same experiences that you are living each day. If you can't leave the house, an online group may be something to consider.

“Hearing about the frustrations and stresses of other caregivers validated my own feelings of frustration and stress. Knowing we shared common caregiving experiences (from wandering to finding mail in the freezer) was a huge relief, at least to me.” – Pam

We at Positive Approach® try to provide caregivers with new dementia awareness, knowledge and skills to help reduce their daily stress by empowering them to be more in control and know better how to **respond** versus **react** when interacting with the person they are caring for.

To become more dementia competent check out Teepa's DVDs offered in our [CARE STORE](#) like [Dementia Care Provision: Reducing Risk by Changing Care Strategies](#) and [PAC Skills Make The Difference](#). Or take our [Online Course](#) and experience Teepa's information and approach from your own home.

Whether you are caring for someone living with dementia or simply interested in learning more about this disease called **Dementia**...contact us at **Positive Approach®** by calling **877.877.1671** or [email us](#).