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Care for Others Without Sacrificing Your Health

THE AXIOM THAT “some give, some give all” is meaningful in these trying times. People everywhere are stepping up to help aging parents while caring for their children. The real danger we see so often is the caregiver losing sight of self-care.

I have had caregivers get sick, even die, and the adult children had to find emergency housing for the spouse with Alzheimer’s disease (the children didn’t know their father had memory loss). Another family found their 80-year-old mother walking down the middle of the street returning to her place of work from 15 years earlier. There are thousands of similar stories. The following tips are offered to help caregivers stay healthy and maintain inner calm while navigating the pandemic and demanding lives.

STRESS REDUCTION

Scheduling some downtime for yourself is a must. Using a block of time for exercise, meditation, reading, or any activity that nurtures you. Add such activities to your calendar with an alert.

AVOID DRAMA

Surround yourself with supportive people.

Avoiding drama (and those who love it) will go a long way toward creating a calming environment.

PROPER DIET AND REST

You cannot take care of other people if you’re neglecting yourself. Make it a daily goal to get eight hours of sleep and eat nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Have your energy gauge on “full” to help others.

LEARN ABOUT RESOURCES

Doing internet research and inquiring about local support groups, benefits, and programs that will support you and your loved ones is a way to extend your support network with qualified professionals in the senior care field.

SHARE YOUR FEELINGS WITH OTHERS

Being open about your feelings is cathartic. If you tend to over-share, or your friends appear to be growing weary of listening, then it might be time to speak with a professional who can offer coping strategies.

TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME

Life is short and every moment counts. Loving your children and parents are instinctive priorities,

but don’t lose sight of loving yourself. Live for the day and leave the superhero cape behind.

BOUNDARIES

Establish boundaries and realize when to say “no”. If your instincts say you’ve reached capacity, it’s time to dial back and stick to achievable goals. Setting boundaries is part of self-respect. Insist that people treat you fairly and respectfully. Those around you must understand that you are human and have limitations. Scheduling time for visits and phone calls with those who “mean well” will help manage the situation.

ADOPT AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Express thanks to those who support you. Maintain friendships and bonding with those who help you through difficult times for a healthier life.

ACCEPT HELP

Allowing others into your private space to assist with household chores, shopping, bill payment, or supporting your loved ones while you run errands is not a sign of weakness. Clarify to others what you need help with, be honest about your level of need, and delegate tasks to other that can be accomplished with little involvement on your part.

Finding inner peace and joy in a caregiver role requires a village. If you find yourself feeling lost or alone, please step back and ask for assistance. Giving your best effort is wonderful, but you must not go it alone. U



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Inc. an A+ Accredited Senior Move Management company offering moving assistance, organizing, estate liquidations, staging, and more. Elderwerks Educational Services is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization offering complimentary information, referrals, and guidance to older adults, seniors and families for senior living, care, support and benefits. They act as “senior guidance counselors” helping individuals or couples figure out how to stay home well or transition successfully. Visit: elderwerks.org or call 855-462-0100 for personal assistance.