Avoiding the caregiver crunch

Over time, you can stretch yourself thin managing your own life, the elderly person in your care, your kids, your job and endless list of responsibilities. In fact, research suggests that elder caregivers will spend more time tending to older loved ones than caring for their own children. Carve out time for yourself and avoid caregiver burnout by.



Taking time out for you. With so much energy going to other people, it's easy to forget about yourself. Make time on a regular basis for yoga class, a romantic getaway with your partner, or your favourite author. Many caregivers feel guilty for enjoying themselves, but interests, hobbies and plain old fun can actually help you relax and recharge so you can provide the best care. Be sure to establish boundaries so that when you're taking some "me" time no one interrupts.

Getting support. Need a break? Ask a relative to take over for a day or look into community respite services that can help lighten your load. Connect with others in a similar situation by joining a local caregiving support group or an online forum. Remember: you don't have to go it alone. Support is out there.

Knowing good health equals good care. To give the best care, you need the best you. Stay emotionally and physically healthy by getting enough rest and eating a well-balanced diet. Squeeze in exercise whenever possible—get off the bus a stop early, take the stairs, etc.—to boost your energy, mood and shed stress.

Planning it out. Shave time off running errands and daily tasks by getting organized. See if your local grocer or pharmacy delivers and pay bills online or through pre-authorized payments. Hold a family meeting and create a chart that assigns chores to every member. Simplifying a hectic schedule can go a long way in easing anxiety and your time crunch.

Being a caregiver is challenging and, at times, taxing. The rewards of caring for someone you love, however, outweigh these demands. Be sure to look after your own emotional and physical well-being so you're able to invest the strength needed to provide the best care to your loved one. After all, this might be the most important job you ever have.