

Wellness Idea for Family and Front-Line Caregivers

Jane Meier Hamilton, RN, MSN. jane@PartnersonthePath.com

Founder: Partners on the Path, LLC. www.PartnersonthePath.com



My tip: **Don't try to FIND time for self-care...MAKE time for self-care**

Like other caregivers who are overloaded with responsibilities, you may ask, "How can I *FIND* the time for self-care?" If you want to relieve your stress and feel better, *change the question*.

Instead, ask, "***How do I MAKE time for self-care?***" *The answer is to admit, permit and commit to practicing healthy self-care.*

1. **ADMIT to needing self-care.** *You are a human being, not a "caregiving machine" that plugs into an electrical socket for energy. You aren't the Energizer Bunny whose endless energy is powered by batteries. No, your human energy is natural and comes from within. It ebbs and flows; when energy is spent it must be replenished. Self-care practices restore energy.*

Juggling and struggling with caregiving takes a toll. Overlooking the cost of over-functioning leaves you vulnerable to stress-related illness. So stop minimizing or denying how caregiving impacts your well-being. Take the first step and admit to your need for self-care.

2. **PERMIT yourself to act on your own behalf.** Think about what keeps you from self-care. Is it: *Guilt* about taking time for yourself when others need so much? *Questioning the importance* of self-care? *Doubting* small acts of self-care will add up to much of anything? Research shows that self-care positively impacts physical and mental health. *Self-care isn't selfish; it's a valuable health promotion activity.*

Reframe your thoughts about self-care; view it as a healthy habit, like daily dental care. Brushing and flossing every day takes little time or much thought. But done daily for years, these small acts add up to significant dental health. Like this; *little acts of self-care, every day, add up to a healthier you.* So think of it as *a necessity for a healthy life.*

3. **COMMIT to daily action.** Picture putting one or two pennies into a glass jar every day. As weeks turn into months and an entire year passes, those daily penny deposits add up to a jar that is overflowing. Small, daily acts of self-care are just like those coins in the jar; they fill you up.

Promise to care for yourself, just as you care for others. Put yourself on your "to-do" list. Do whatever relieves stress and brings you joy. As with any healthy habit, the more you do it, the easier it becomes. When self-care becomes your habit, you'll FIND the time because you've MADE time for self-care.

Two resources:

1. Penny Story--Small acts of self-care add up to a healthier you! <https://vimeo.com/18023045>
2. Self-Care Checklist: What healthy self-care practices do I find helpful?

Self-Care Checklist: What healthy self-care practices do I find helpful?

Check the self-care practices you use. Look for new ideas. Promise to do what relieves stress and boosts your energy or joy. Aim for diversity and frequency in self-care; it's best for your health. Do something to care for yourself every day!

Physical

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Exercise regularly — Rest during the day — Sleep 7-8 hours at night — Eat a balanced diet — Limit “junk food” — Drink eight glasses of water daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Maintain weight in desired range — Limit alcohol consumption — Do not smoke — Use medications as prescribed — Visit physician for check-ups — Practice yoga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Practice the relaxation response — Groom yourself – manicure, facial, haircut, shave, etc. — Get a massage — Receive chiropractic care — Practice Reiki — Engage in outdoor activities
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Emotional

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Allow yourself to feel emotions — Appropriately & respectfully express emotions — Work off anger with physical exercise — Say “no” when you want or need to — Ask directly for what you want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Cry — Laugh — Resolve conflicts — Nurture yourself — Don't take things too seriously
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Mental

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Ask questions — Accept ambiguity — Read — Take risks — Practice guided imagery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Daydream — Learn something new — Consider different viewpoints — Read self-help books — Use visualization or affirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Relabel unpleasant situations — Develop plans — Think optimistically — Use helpful web-based resources — Take responsibility for yourself/your life
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Social

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Develop and use support systems — Talk with friends and family — Take time off — Go on vacation — Rehabilitate or end unsatisfactory relationships — Limit TV viewing — Engage in a creative pastime or hobby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Read humorous books/watch humorous shows — Socialize with others — Enjoy intimacy or sex — Play — Spend time alone — Treat yourself to something enjoyable: new clothes, CD's, magazine, etc. — Engage in volunteer activities
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Spiritual

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Pray or meditate — Commune with nature — “Let go” of unsolvable problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Attend worship services — Read inspirational prose or poetry — Appreciate the beauty of art or music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Take one day at a time — Clarify your values and beliefs — Acknowledge your self-worth
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Occupational: Employment and/or Caregiving Work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Learn new skills — Pace yourself — Balance involvement and detachment — Seek respite-daily, periodic, short term, or vacations — Get organized — Take breaks — Do your best and let go of the rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Share responsibilities with others — Let others sometimes do a stressful/difficult task — Beautify your environment — Acknowledge the good you do — Leave work at work — Develop good relationships with co-workers — Open yourself to change — Use Employee Assistance Program/your employer's helpful resources
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Problem Solving Action

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Effectively manage time — Assertively communicate with others — Negotiate with others for desired outcomes — Constructively resolve conflict — Create a comfortable home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Learn new information or life skills — Change dysfunctional/self-defeating behaviors — Clarify or resolve misunderstandings — Budget and wisely manage finances — Keep possessions in good working order
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