INSPIRE TO MOVE - Caring for Yourself as a Caregiver

By Colleen Crawford

The role of caregiver is one that most of us will experience in different ways and at different times throughout our lives. As caregivers, we often devote ourselves deeply to those we care for, sometimes to the detriment of our own well-being. November offers the perfect opportunity to turn the focus from caregiving to self-care, as we celebrate National Family Caregiver Month.

While there is no single way in which to be a caregiver, the one factor that is constant is the need for and importance of self-care. We may feel selfish or guilty taking time to tend to ourselves, however, doing so allows us to offer our best self to those we care for.

The Family Caregiver Alliance suggests the following eight tools to help us employ good self-care:

- **Reduce Personal Stress** – Recognize warning signs and take action before you feel too overwhelmed. Identify sources of stress as well as what you can and cannot change.
- **Set Goals** – Goals may be related to caregiving or self-care. Once you have a goal in mind, outline possible action steps to help you achieve the goal.

- **Seek Solutions** – Identify the problem and list possible solutions. Taking steps to solve concerns can help give you a sense of control and increase self-confidence.

- **Communicate Constructively** – Communicating clearly and respectfully supports a positive relationship.

- **Ask for and Accept Help** – Think of small ways that others can help and tailor requests to the person’s interests and abilities.

- **Talk to a Physician** – Build a partnership with a physician or medical care team and prepare questions ahead of time for appointments.

- **Start to Exercise** – Find a type of exercise you enjoy and try to build regular exercise time into your weekly schedule. Walking can be a great place to start!

- **Learn from Your Emotions** – Recognize your emotions and use them to understand what is happening to trigger them.

For more caregiver resources, visit the Caregiver Action Network for their [Family Caregiver Toolbox](https://www.caregiver.org/toolbox) and [10 Tips for Family Caregivers](https://www.caregiver.org/family-caregivers/10-tips-for-family-caregivers).