



*This blog post was created as part of a series for an elderly healthcare site that also offered a directory of in-home health workers. The series was focused on the adult caregiver of elderly parents and included placement on the company's WordPress site.*

## 5 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS FOR CAREGIVERS

Juggling a full-time job with even part-time caregiving in addition to raising a family or dealing with other life events can quickly become overwhelming. This is especially true for the more than 32 million Americans currently failing to identify themselves as caregivers.

If you regularly perform housekeeping, grocery shopping, transportation, bill-paying, appointment setting, or medication services for a loved one, you might be a caregiver. If you're just now realizing this describes you, here are five ways you can dramatically reduce the stress in your life right now.

### Immediate relief

If you need immediate relief from stress, take a deep breath in right now and hold it while you read the next sentence. Deep breathing instantly calms. Now let out the breath slowly. Repeat this process while you read the rest of the article - taking a deep breath in, holding it for a moment, letting it out slowly. By incorporating regular meditation sessions into your daily schedule, you can significantly reduce the amount of stress you feel. Once you are more in practice, you can bring on a sense of calm any time you need by simply taking a deep breath in, holding it for a moment, and letting it out slowly. Focus on the breath rather than the thousand things that want to run through your mind.

### Connect with others

Research by the AARP suggests caregivers can be healthier overall than their non-caregiver counterparts *if* they have a community support group. This could include in-home assistance programs, church groups, groups formed specifically to provide support for caregivers dealing with the type of issue your loved one is coping with, online support groups, adult day care programs, and volunteer groups. With their help, you can organize a support team to draw on when you need extra help or just need to get away.

### Get educated

After you've connected with others, you'll have access to all the information you could need about your loved one's problem and what can be done to alleviate the condition and/or prepare for the future. Fear and worry, both negative emotions that increase feelings of stress, can be greatly alleviated by understanding what is to come and how to deal with it. Knowing where to go for the information you need when you need it is another benefit of getting connected.

### Be active

Regular physical exercise for the caregiver is important not just for the caregiver's well-being, but also for the loved one. Strenuous activity can help the body process stress hormones in a more positive direction while encouraging the production of more positive 'happy' hormones in the

brain. This doesn't have to be a dreaded activity that you force yourself to do for at least 10 minutes a day. Choose something you enjoy - swimming, walking, gardening, jogging, dancing, jump rope, hula hoop, or just being silly chasing the kids around the yard.

### Make time for yourself

When you're a caregiver, it's easy to dedicate all your time to taking care of the various needs of your loved ones - the one needing care as well as the rest of your family and friends. From the moment you wake up until the second you fall asleep, you're helping someone else with something they need. Be sure to schedule time for yourself, time to spend with friends, and most importantly, time to laugh. Far from detracting from the services you provide your loved one, ensuring you continue to enjoy life and stay connected to friends and fun can alleviate some of the guilt and frustration your loved one feels at depending on you for their needs. Even 30 minutes a week of you-time can do wonders for your stress levels.