### **SELF-CARE TIPS**

Importance of Self-care for Caregivers

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By neglecting their own needs, their caregiving can be negatively impacted. Caregiving is demanding and can be extremely stressful. It can take an emotional and physical toll on the caregiver. By practicing self-care, caregivers can make sure their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs are met, but many caregivers don’t know where to start when it comes to self-care.

Self-care is often misunderstood. Caregivers worry that they are being selfish by taking care of themselves, but self-care is not selfish. It is necessary especially when you are dealing with stress and changed circumstances. Self-care simply put is identifying your needs and taking steps to meet them. It is similar to the oxygen mask on an airplane, you have to put yours on first to help others. Practicing self-care allows caregivers to meet their own needs so they can best meet the needs of the child they are raising.

### **Tips for practicing self-care for Grandfamilies:**

* Think about your physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs.
* Identify where your personal stress comes from and determine if there are any stressors you can cut out or cut back on.
* Communicate effectively when talking about your needs with others, if you are asking for help be clear in doing so. Try to not minimize your request by adding phrases like “if you can.”
* Be open to trying different forms of self-care to find what works best for you.

### Examples of self-care:

* Saying no to things you cannot or do not want to do
* Taking time off (or time to yourself) without feeling guilty
* Talking with a loved one or trusted friend
* Sleeping regularly and for long enough
* Stretching
* Reading a good book
* Journaling

#### For more information on self-care for grandfamily caregivers check out:

* The practicing [self-care section](https://www.gu.org/app/uploads/2019/01/Grandfamilies-Report-GRANDResource-SelfCare.pdf) of Generations United’s newest publication [*Grand Resource: Help for Grandfamilies Impacted by Opioids and Other Substance Use*](https://www.gu.org/app/uploads/2019/01/Grandfamilies-Report-GRANDResource-Opioids.pdf)
* Carezare: [*5 Self Care Tips for Caregivers with Limited Time*](https://www.carezare.com/blog/2018/1/2/5-self-care-tips-for-caregivers-with-limited-time)
* ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center: [9 Steps to Respite Care for Grandfamilies](https://ttaconline.org/Resource/JWHaEa5BS74QIzvUuQsa1w/Resource-9-steps-to-respite-care-for-grandfamilies-arch-national-respite-network-and-resource-center)
* Family Caregiver Alliance: [A Guide to Taking Care of Yourself](https://www.caregiver.org/guide-taking-care-yourself) and [Caregiver Self-Care: Caring for You](https://www.caregiver.org/taking-care-you-self-care-family-caregivers)
* National Alliance on Mental Illness: [Taking Care Of Yourself](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers/Taking-Care-of-Yourself)

**Five Tips for Parents during the Pandemic -**

### **1. Take time to unwind**

Give yourself a moment at the end of each day where you **do something just for you, and if possible, with no kids**. Take a bath, watch a favorite show or sit on your patio and enjoy a drink, responsibly. Whatever it is, give yourself permission to enjoy this moment. It will help you recenter and prepare for tomorrow.

### **2. Take a break from social media**

While it is important to stay up-to-date on the news surrounding COVID-19, it can become overwhelming. Take a break from social media and **put your phone down for at least a few hours each day.**  This will help you keep things in perspective.

### **3. Exercise**

Exercise is a great way to boost your immune system and ease anxiety. It will also help you pass the time. Participate in a free online fitness class, or have a dance party in your living room. Take a break from working and do some stretches. If your state’s stay-at-home order allows you to go outside, take a walk with the kids. Whatever it is, get up off the couch and **get moving**.

### **4. Be mindful**

Mindfulness, living in the present moment, is a great way to help you find balance and manage your stress. Several people think of mindfulness as traditional meditation and breathing exercises. While those work for many, there are several other ways you can be mindful. Listed below are some **quick mindfulness exercises** that might help you throughout the day.

* Eat your meals slowly. Pay attention to the taste. Is it sour, sweet or salty?
* Sit on your patio and take a moment to listen to the birds chirping or feel the breeze.
* Focus on a positive affirmation. Repeat it to yourself for 2 minutes straight.
* Take a bath. Notice the feel and temperature of the water on your skin.
* Write in your journal. Take a moment to write down your current feelings.

### **5. Take it one day at a time**

Every day during self-quarantine will be different, and it will be filled with new adventures and challenges. Your kids might be super excited about home schooling one day and the next day completely hate it. You can have the energy to make a three course dinner, and the next day your kids eat cold cereal. That is OK. **Brace yourself for these changes, and try to be flexible when they happen.** Don’t blame yourself or others if things don’t go according to plan. This is a difficult time for everyone, so simply take it one day at a time.

**Self-Care Strategies to Help Single Parents Avoid Burnout**

1. Take a long walk.
2. Check out a yoga video or DVD from your local library, and make time to do it twice a week.
3. Read a fiction book or short story that you can totally lose yourself in.
4. Write your life story.
5. Daydream.
6. Try a new recipe.
7. Avoid single parent burnout by getting a babysitter and go to a movie alone.
8. Write a letter to a friend.
9. Smile.
10. Set the timer, close your eyes, and breathe deeply for five minutes.
11. Read a magazine.
12. Clean your house - it's a great stress reliever!
13. Sit outside and breathe fresh air.
14. Get up fifteen minutes early so you can linger over a cup of coffee.
15. [Swap play dates with a neighbor so you can each enjoy a few minutes of solitude](https://www.liveabout.com/scheduling-playdates-for-your-children-2997703).
16. Bake a scrumptious dessert just for you.
17. Re-read something that has been especially encouraging to you.
18. Write in a journal.
19. Go to a park and sit on the swings with your kids.
20. Go to bed an hour early.
21. Watch the sunset.
22. Listen to soothing music.
23. Grow something, such as a house plant or fresh herbs.
24. Sit with a cup of hot chocolate or some hot tea.
25. Surround yourself with pictures of the people you love and things you care about.
26. Give yourself permission to say "No" to something you really don't have time for or are not interested in.
27. Say "Yes" to something you'd really like to do!
28. Express your creativity.
29. [Lend a hand to someone else](https://www.liveabout.com/ways-to-help-a-single-mom-or-dad-2998095).
30. Hug your kids!

## Self-care tips for parents during the pandemic

Aside from following the [CDC health guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) of wearing a mask and social-distancing, there are a few things parents can do to practice self-care during COVID-19.

### **1. Prioritize physical health and activity.**

Physical care is important, especially when many of us are working from home and traveling less. This includes eating a healthy diet, drinking plenty of water, and getting seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

Each day you should aim to exercise for at least 30 minutes. This could mean going for a walk or doing yoga. Others may feel comfortable doing a more intense training. There are some fitness centers that are holding virtual classes or outdoor workouts. Getting fresh air and spending time outside is good for both physical and mental health.

### **2. Establish a routine for yourself and your family.**

Routines are good for mental health and especially helpful with children because they allow everyone in the house to know what to expect. There may be days when the routine cannot be followed, and that's okay. Continue to try to stick with it and change things when needed.

### **3. Have regular family meetings.**

Family meetings are an effective way to have discussions about rules of the house and touching base on how each person is feeling. It is important to set ground rules for each meeting. At each meeting you can review the family calendar, make a chore chart, or discuss time limits for electronics.

### **4. Focus on what you can control.**

It is essential that you focus on the present and things you can control. There are things that can happen each day, such as no internet access or rain that can ruin your planned park day, which you have no control over. In these cases you may have to improvise or have a quick change backup plan.

### **5. Limit your news consumption.**

With so many negative news stories out there, you may want to limit exposure to news, only turning to one or two reliable news sources. Instead, spend your time keeping in touch with your friends and family through Zoom or FaceTime. Make time for things you enjoy, such as listening to music or reading books. Some libraries are starting to reopen and are offering holds on books with curbside pickups. Find ways to help within your community such as donating blood or collecting food for a local food bank. These will help you focus on the people in your community who need help.

### **6. Exercise self-compassion.**

Most importantly, be kind to yourself. What we are experiencing is new for everyone and you need to do what you are comfortable with. If you find yourself feeling constantly anxious or overwhelmed, reach out to a health professional in your area or contact your insurance company about telehealth visits.

While trying these activities, please be mindful of parent permission and social distancing.

We had a few people in our community reach out for ideas on coping skills to use at home and how to manage stress, anxiety, and depression during this pandemic. We decided to create this article of 102 Self-Care Ideas & Activities to do at Home during the quarantine that we can share with everyone. Many of these ideas are great for kids and teens at home.

1. Call, Text, or FaceTime a supportive friend or loved one. FaceTiming is most encouraged to have a virtual face to face interaction!
2. Take a walk or bike ride outside
3. Paint your nails.
4. Take a shower or bubble bath.
5. Get ready in the morning even if you have nowhere to go.
6. Read a book. E-Books, as well as movies, audiobooks, and magazines, are available through Greene Country Library digital apps and websites. (Listed Below)
7. Do exercise videos. Websites and subscription streaming services are also available such as YouTube, Amazon Prime, etc.
8. Process your worries and/or sadness with a supportive parent or friend. Remember, it is okay to cry to feel better and or get information to calm down your worries.
9. Do a virtual museum tour!

These Links provide a list of museums from around the world that you can visit a home (Smithsonian, NASA, The Air Force Museum, etc.) [Museums from home](https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/75809/12-world-class-museums-you-can-visit-online) [More Museums from home](https://www.parents.com/syndication/museums-with-virtual-tours/?utm_campaign=parents_parentsmagazine&utm_content=internalsyndication_travelandleisure&utm_medium=social4&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_term=FD51F848-6550-11EA-9FBA-CF782FEB5590).

1. Go to the Zoo Online.
	1. [Cincinnati Zoo](http://cincinnatizoo.org/news-releases/cincinnati-zoo-is-bringing-the-zoo-to-you/)
	2. [Other Zoos](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/travel/a31784720/best-virtual-tours/)
2. Go to a virtual amusement park!
	1. [Walt Disney World](https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2018/03/disney-parks-launches-first-ever-360-degree-panoramas-on-google-street-view/)
	2. [LegoLand](https://www.legoland.dk/en/accommodation/hotel-legoland/virtual-tour/)
	3. [SeaWorld](https://www.visitorlando.com/en/things-to-do/virtual-tours/seaworld-orlando)
3. Blow bubbles.
4. Eat your favorite ice cream (but don’t go overboard).
5. Dance to fun guided songs such as The Cha-Cha Slide, Cupid Shuffle, Peanut Butter Jelly time, Hokey-Pokey, Chicken Dance, etc. What is your favorite song to dance to?
6. Keep a journal of positive experiences and read it when feeling sad.
7. Play with your pet if you have one.
8. Dye your hair or change your hair style.
9. Do jumping jacks or run in place.
10. Watch your favorite TV show
11. Do Jumping jack s or run in place.
12. Sing as loud as you can.
13. Listen to music.
14. Make a daily schedule, have a to do list, have routine.
15. Eat your favorite comfort food but don’t go overboard
16. make a craft for someone.
17. Write or draw how you are feeling in your journal.
18. Write a letter or make a card for a family member or friend.
19. Wear your favorite outfit that makes you feel good about yourself.
20. Play your favorite game.
21. Watch a craft tutorial on YouTube and make a craft.
22. study or get ahead on schoolwork.
23. Try balance or yoga exercise.
24. Pray/meditate/do something spiritual.
25. Check on someone via phone, text, or Facetime. This is encouraged daily or a few times per week.
26. Remind yourself of your goals and find one to work on at home.
27. Say something nice to yourself or someone around you, tell yourself or others positive and affirming statements.
28. Talk to your therapist/counselor via a telehealth program.
29. Plant your favorite flower or herb if seeds are available.
30. Go online shopping for a small appreciation gift for a friend.
31. Find a recipe and cook something new.
32. Check out online recreational exercise facilities for live streaming videos from workout instructors.
33. Do a chore to help your parents.
34. Start an online book club with a friend.
35. Play or learn to play a musical instrument.
36. Start an online book club for friend. .
37. Play or learn to play a musical instrument.
38. Knit/crochet or learn how to do this skill.
39. Clean out your closet and donate unneeded items at the end of quarantine.
40. Help parents with cooking dinner.
41. Take some pictures outside.
42. Clean a room in your house.
43. Write a play or a book.
44. Plant a container garden.
45. If you have a younger sibling, play or read with them.
46. Check on your grandparents via phone or online.
47. Surf the internet for something healthy and positive you would like to know more about
48. Write a poem
49. Draw
50. Take a nap
51. Paint
52. Do something that you know will make you laugh
53. Watch the clouds go by
54. Do some home repairs
55. Sort through your photographs
56. Make a scrapbook
57. Volunteer from home
58. Take a hike or nature walk with others while practicing social distancing
59. Try a new exercise
60. Do Sudoku
61. Do a crossword puzzle
62. Play solitaire
63. Bird watch .
64. Mow your lawn
65. Plan menus
66. Do laundry
67. Play with younger siblings, cousins, neighbors
68. Read the newspaper or magazine
69. Start an online journal/blog (with parent approval)
70. Watch a video or tv show you haven’t seen for a while
71. Read a favorite childhood book
72. Roller-skate or skateboard
73. Burn a cd or make a playlist for you or you and your friends
74. Play basketball or kick a ball around
75. Play a video game
76. Have your favorite piece of candy
77. Finish something you started and haven’t gotten around to finishing
78. Ask your best friend for suggestions
79. Make a “happy” book- something to refer to when mood is low
80. Practice mindfulness (practice being fully present while breathing, eating, or doing routine activities
81. Make a collage of magazine cut-outs (pictures, phrases, etc) to go around your mirror that remind you of your strengths and what you want to be.
82. Make a mood log – this can help identify things that have been associated with happy or sad feelings and the whatever the things were that helped to change these moods
83. Organize a collection.
84. Learn a new skill you have been wanting to learn.
85. Do a guided meditation through an app or online video.
86. Blend and diffuse essential oils.
87. Do a scavenger hunt in your backyard.
88. Have a picnic in your backyard.
89. Play on your swing set or Trampoline if you have one.
90. Ride a skateboard or roller blade.
91. Use sidewalk chalk to draw pictures and write encouraging messages.
92. Make your bed daily.
93. Utilize a cope ahead plan and think of activities to do for the next day.
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Virtual Seminar for Parents with Children who are special needs:

https://www.wbfn.org/event/virtual-seminar-self-care-parents-special-needs-kids