



For Families or Caregivers: Self-Care is Putting on YOUR Oxygen Mask First

Family Advisory Board Tip Sheet

Tip Sheet 18

Transitions ACR

August 2019

“ I don't have time to put myself first

“ I feel guilty taking care of myself before others

“ It's all my fault

“ I feel like there's no light at the end of the tunnel

“ I feel selfish putting myself first

“ I am ashamed that I can't get it together

“ I always feel so alone and isolated

“ I don't have anyone I can count on or ask for help

“ I'm exhausted and tired of all the drama

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT?



Why Should I Put My Oxygen Mask on First?

Self Care is Important

During pre-flight instructions, flight attendants tell passengers that in the case of an emergency they should put their own oxygen mask on first even before helping children because otherwise the passenger will run out of oxygen and be unable to help anyone else. This is true when it comes to self-care because putting oneself first is an unselfish act and a priority. If you do not take care of yourself, you cannot help others. Being the caregiver for someone with a mental health challenge can be very difficult, but you must take a little time for yourself. *Self-care can start with just 5 minutes a day!*

When you practice self-care, you may:

- ✓ Feel calmer
- ✓ Feel more grounded
- ✓ Feel more energetic
- ✓ Feel healthier
- ✓ Sleep better
- ✓ Eat better
- ✓ Have an easier time managing relationships
- ✓ Have less anxiety or fewer negative thoughts
- ✓ Feel better able to cope with challenges



image credit: rawpixel.com

Self-care is not a one size fits all and what works for you may not work for your friend, but it's what it does for you that's important. It refuels you because it supports your physical, mental and spiritual health. Making time for self-care may not be easy, but it's worth it. Building a new habit or routine takes time. Research has shown it takes at least 2 months to make a behavior a habit. And keep at it because the same research has shown that if you miss a day that won't affect making self-care a habit.

Making Time for Self-care



Wake up 5 minutes earlier than normal



Look at how you spend your time and see where you waste time doing something that does not benefit your mental, physical or spiritual health and break this habit



Take a quick walk at work



Schedule in "me time" and stick to it



Pick a self-care activity or area that is most important to you and focus on that



Plan for big self-care activities such as camping, shopping, dates, classes, travel, massage—whatever works for you

5 Minute Self-Care Ideas...

- Breathe deeply
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Phone or text a friend
- Do some stretching
- Hum a tune or sing a song
- Watch a video clip
- Cuddle your pet
- Listen to your favorite song
- Meditate or a quick mindfulness exercise
- Have a treat
- Write in a journal
- Think about 3 things you're grateful for
- Participate in online or live support groups
- Stare out the window
- Say no to one thing today
- Unplug
- List 1 thing you've accomplished today
- Flip through a magazine
- Light a candle or use an essential oil diffuser

Add your own ideas below

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Some activities when you have a bit more time...

- Take a walk
- Listen to an audiobook or podcast
- Spend time in nature
- Play with your pet
- Watch a video or film you enjoy
- Take a bath or shower
- Read a book
- Nap
- Exercise
- Join a team activity
- Start a new hobby or take a class
- Volunteer
- Play a game
- See to your spiritual needs

Add your own ideas below

- _____
- _____
- _____



Parent & Support Group Organizations

- **Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH):** <http://www.acmh-mi.org/>
- **Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation:** <http://www.bpkids.org/>
- **Children's Mental Health Network (CMHN):** <https://www.cmhnetwork.org/>
- **Federation for Children with Special Needs:** <https://fcsn.org/>
- **Family Voices:** <http://familyvoices.org/>
- **FREDLA:** <https://www.fredla.org/>
- **NAMI:** <https://www.nami.org/>
- **NAMI Family Education and Support:** <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Public-Policy/Family-Education-and-Support>
- **NAMI Family-To-Family:** <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Family-to-Family>
- **NAMI Family Support Groups:** <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/Nami-Family-Support-Group>
- **National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (NFFCMH):** <https://www.ffcmh.org/>
- **Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL):** <http://ppal.net/blog>
- **Parents Helping Parents:** <https://www.parentshelpingparents.org/>

RESOURCES ABOUT SELF-CARE

- **Active Minds:** <https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/self-care>
- **Grow a Strong Family:** <https://growastrongfamily.org/>
- **Mayo Clinic:** <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/caregiver-stress/art-20044784>
- **National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI):** <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers/Taking-Care-of-Yourself>
- **National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA):** <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/blog/selfcare-tips-for-caregivers-world-ed-day>
- **Psych Central, Caregiver Burnout: The Importance of Self Care:** <https://psychcentral.com/lib/caregiver-burnout-the-importance-of-self-care>



The contents of this tip sheet were developed under a grant with funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, and from the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (ACL Grant# 90RT5031, The Learning and Working Transitions RRTC). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this tip sheet do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, or SAMHSA and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Suggested Citation: Family Advisory Board of the Transitions ACR. (2019). *For Families or Caregivers: Self-Care is Putting on YOUR Oxygen Mask First*. Worcester, MA: University of Massachusetts Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Implementation Science and Practice Advances Research Center (ISPARC), Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research.

