

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CARING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Effectively caring for others starts with your own self-care

When you think about caring for yourself, does it seem frivolous or even unnecessary? It shouldn't. Particularly if you're caring for a family, it's important to look after your own well-being each day. By doing so, you're helping your loved ones just as much as yourself.

Signs that you're experiencing caregiver stress can include; suffering headaches, dizziness or upset stomach; undergoing a change in sleeping and/or eating habits; feeling anxious or lonely; having trouble concentrating; and feeling withdrawn, angry, or sad.

You may be neglecting the need to have healthy activities in your life that sustain you and keep you strong for those in your care. Here are some ideas for making positive changes.

- Try starting small by doing one thing every day that improves your mental or physical health in some way. You could meditate, do extra stretching, or take a walk after dinner.
- Experts recommend pursuing a mix of activities that help you feel balanced and fulfilled.
- To keep your self-care from falling by the wayside, enlist your partner or a babysitter to take over if you're out. Children benefit from spending time with other caring adults.
- Reduce your time on social media. It's not helpful to compare your parenting life to the cherry-picked lives of others. Breaking free of the phone, you'll be more present for your family.
- Regularly make firm plans to have lunch or see a movie with a friend.
- By eating well, sleeping enough and fitting in some "me" time, you'll be better able to care for those in your charge.
- Strive to be "good enough." Being a good parent doesn't mean being perfect. If you can't stylishly hit the gym, pull out the double stroller and take the munchkins for a spin around the block. It may not be your idealized workout, but it works for everyone involved.

Even the busiest parents can find a few moments to practice self-care. Start with five minutes. Walk to the mailbox and back. Stop and do some deep breathing. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. You can pursue well-being via small steps!

