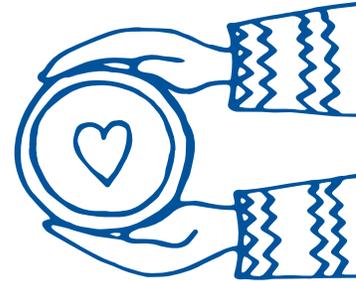


# Taking Care of You

## TIPS FOR THE FAMILY CAREGIVER



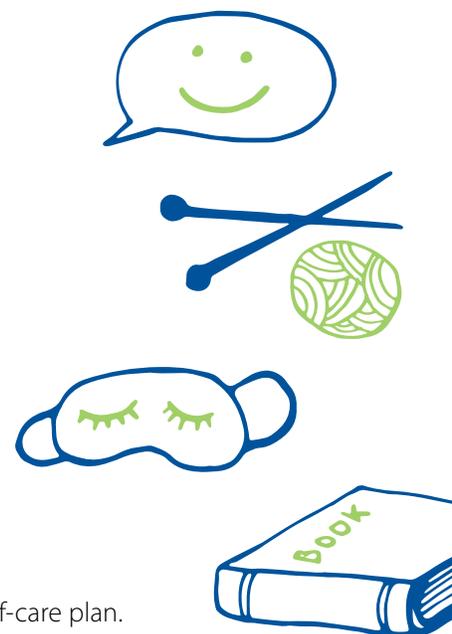
The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused major life disruptions. In our lifetime, we have never dealt with so many variables impacting caregivers, families, employers, and residents of long-term care facilities. As difficult as this pandemic is, it is important for family caregivers to take care of themselves so they can be their best for others. The following information is a reference to emotions you may experience, reminders for practicing self-care, and guidance for seeking assistance.

### TYPICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS MAY INCLUDE:

- Anxiety, worry, fear
- Concern about being able to care for others
- Frustration, Anger
- Loneliness
- Uncertainty, ambivalence
- Sadness
- Feelings of grief and loss
- Desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope
- Symptoms of depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

## Tips for Self-Care

- The emotions you are feeling during this crisis are normal. Talk to someone you trust about how you feel. Seek assistance from a mental health professional for support.
- Take time for you, exercise, take up hobbies, listening to music, read a good book, or watch a movie. Look for opportunities to smile and laugh!
- Stay informed but limit the amount of news you read or listen to daily.
- Eat healthy, stay hydrated, and get 7-8 hours of sleep. Go outside for fresh air.
- If you have concerns regarding household finances due to family members that are recently unemployed or furloughed, speak with your employer or contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) regarding leave, benefits, and possible local, state, and federal supports. Locate local and regional U.S. Department of Labor programs using this [map](#).



## Create a Self-Care Plan

The [USC School of Social Work](#) recommends practicing self-awareness and developing a self-care plan.

- Recognize your stressors and how you respond to them (e.g., trouble sleeping, increased irritability).
- Set time-specific goals for self-care activities (e.g., identify your preferred type of exercise, how often you will exercise, how long you will exercise, and where you will exercise).
- Create a self-care plan using specific goals for physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- Have accountability for your self-care plan (e.g., meet virtually with co-workers or friends and talk about self-care).
- Take advantage of free applications that can be uploaded on electronic devices that can guide you into mindfulness and help you shake off anxiety or stressors.

## Ideas for Staying in Contact with Your Loved One



Visits to long-term care facilities are restricted during this crisis period, with limited exceptions. To find out more about the policies around visitation in your state, contact your State Department of Aging or your Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Find their contact information at [www.theconsumervoicework.org](http://www.theconsumervoicework.org). Even if there are limits on your ability to visit your family member or friend, there are things you can do:

**Stay Connected.** Consider some of these ideas for staying in touch:

- Call or text them often. If the resident does not have a phone, ask the facility to provide one.
- If the resident has an electronic device (tablet, cell phone, computer, etc.) or if one can be loaned, hold virtual face-to-face conversations.
- Talk with facility staff about options for visitation such as talking by phone while seeing each other through a facility window or visiting outdoors in nice weather.
- Write letters, notes, and cards to residents. Share special memories of your time together and ask other family members and friends to do the same.
- If the resident is unable to communicate, ask the staff to provide you with regular updates about their health and wellbeing. Ask that they activate a video call so you can see your loved one.

**Family Councils.** If you are a member of the Family Council, continue to hold meetings virtually. If there is no Family Council, start one. Get information on establishing a Family Council at <https://theconsumervoicework.org/issues/family/family-council-center>. Contact your long-term care ombudsman if you need assistance.

**Caring for others.** Talk with family, friends, and neighbors about caregiving responsibilities. Ask for help when needed. Discuss options for checking on your family member or friend if you are quarantined and/or sick.

## RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

<https://theconsumervoicework.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>

National Center on Elder Abuse

<https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/COVID-19.aspx>

## Need Help?

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, board and care homes, and similar adult care homes. Visit <https://theconsumervoicework.org/get-help>, to find your state program.

Contact **Eldercare Locator** to locate resources in your state. Eldercare Locator is a national public service to help older adults and caregivers connect with local aging and disability services. Call **1-800-677-1116** or visit [www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov).

