

# Self-care for the caregiver

## Why is it important?

Taking care of yourself is one of the best ways to care for your loved one. When you feel well, you can help the person who is ill. Caregiving is hard work and can affect your health and well-being. Here are some ways to care for yourself:

## Physical needs

- Keep your own doctor appointments.
- Eat healthy meals three times a day. If cooking is too much, ask family or friends for help or make meals ahead of time
- Take time to rest.
- Avoid or limit tobacco and alcohol since they can disturb your sleep.
- Exercise daily, even if it's just a walk around the block.
- Spend time alone doing something you enjoy, like reading, listening to music, taking a bath, praying, or gardening.

## Communication needs

- Talk about your worries and feelings with family, friends, or healthcare providers. Sharing can reduce stress.
- Ask what signs and symptoms to expect in your loved one. Knowing what might happen can help you feel more prepared
- Don't hesitate to ask others for help with tasks for you or your loved one. Assigning jobs to family or friends can ease your workload
- Stay organized with care team visits and note any changes in the schedule

### Emotional and spiritual needs

- Keep up relationships with family and friends. Invite them to visit you, not just the patient.
- Enjoy social activities and keep up with hobbies you love, when possible.
- Remind yourself that what you're doing is important and meaningful, even if your loved one cannot express their gratitude.
- Let your hospice or palliative care team know if you feel overwhelmed. They can offer help, like nursing assistants or other resources.
- Visit with clergy or a religious group if it brings you comfort.
- Create a personal space for yourself. This could be as simple as a chair where you can relax and unwind.
- Seek professional help if you feel scared, helpless, lost, or depressed.

Taking care of yourself helps you be the best caregiver you can be.

### Other helpful resources

Caregiver Confidence

