



15 Ways To Practice Self Care And Avoid Burnout

By Haley Burress

You spend your workday caring for others. You carefully plan activities that will suit your residents and lead those groups with energy and smiles. You encourage your staff members and educate other departments on how to get more involved with the residents you serve. You rally volunteers and keep family members happy.

In between all that, you complete paperwork, make staff schedules and decorate the community room for the next party. Then, you head home to care for your family. One important question - who takes care of you?

What is Caregiver Burnout?

When you spend most of your time pouring energy and care into others, you are at high risk for [experiencing caregiver burnout](#). Caregiver burnout can cause serious emotional and physical negative side effects like:

- Weakened immune system
- Increased feelings of depression and/or anxiety
- Anger or mood swings
- Feelings of isolation or resentment
- Increased blood pressure

Beyond those serious side effects, caregiver burnout can cause additional complications for people who work in the activity profession. For example, you could experience:

- Decreased creativity (not good for planning meaningful activity calendars)
- Increased fatigue or exhaustion (not good for leading groups that people love)

- Decreased patience (not good for stressful trips or events)
- Disorganization (not good for documentation compliance or advanced planning)

The Self-Care Solution

You can avoid caregiver burnout by practicing self-care. What is self-care? It's anything you do that makes you feel cared for. When you make time for self-care, you give yourself the rest, love, and attention that you need in order to be the best caregiver possible.

Some people use the phrase "love in before love out" when talking about self-care in respect to people who are caregivers. You may have also heard the analogy of filling your own bucket before filling others or putting on your own oxygen mask before helping others. In any case, you need to keep yourself healthy and ready to take on the challenges of your workday.

If you make your own self-care a priority, scheduling in time each day or week, you can:

- Lower your perceived stress levels
- Feel emotionally equipped to handle bad days
- Be more creative and ready to try new things
- Avoid the flu bug going around (or feel better sooner)
- Have the energy to smile through that next meeting with the difficult family
- Provide encouragement to your staff when they feel overwhelmed
- Come up with solutions to problems that pop up throughout the day
- Hug an upset resident instead of feeling angry at them for interrupting your activity
- Represent your senior community well when out on a trip to the farmer's market with 12 residents with dementia
- Give better advice to family members on how to care for themselves during times of crisis

15 Self-Care Activities

Self-care can look different for everyone. You have to try new things until you find some practices that work best for you. Make sure you have plenty of self-care activities that work for you, and not just one.

Self-care activities could include:

- Walking around the neighborhood
- Praying or meditating
- Taking a yoga class, zumba class, or other exercise class
- Taking a bath
- Curling up with a good book
- Trying a new recipe in the kitchen
- Going to your medical and dental check-ups
- Talking to a therapist
- Journaling three things you are thankful for before bedtime
- Repeating a favorite mantra or phrase
- Listening to a podcast
- Eating lunch (sitting down and not on the run)
- Drinking enough water
- Flipping through a favorite magazine
- Putting a mask on your face or a treatment in you hair

Your self-care can include other people, like spending time with friends at your monthly Book Club meeting. However, you should not consider chores as self-care. For example, grocery shopping alone on a Monday evening is a chore, not self-care. Your self-care activities should also not include alcohol, as that can be an unhealthy coping mechanism.

You work hard for your seniors, your community, and your co-workers. Make sure you are working hard for yourself too by committing to practicing self-care on a regular basis. You will find that you can feel the benefits after just a few months, and people around you will notice too.