



## **Caregiver Self-Care: Embracing the Magic in the Moment Handout**

The challenge for Caregivers to pay attention to self-care can be difficult but especially important due to the negative effects that result from the self-neglect that may occur as a result of caregiving.

### **Potential Barriers to Self-Care**

There are a million and one reasons why engaging in the prescribed activities of self-care just don't materialize. Why would you be resistant to something that is supposed to make you feel good?

- Caregiving became consuming; when drawing your attention to the demands and needs of another; it is easier to lose sight of your own need for care.
- Some Caregivers may have spent a lifetime in the role of caring for others developing keen skills of attending to others but the ability to recognize or prioritize what you are feeling or needing may be compromised.
- Not having the time can be a barrier that is often reported as the reason self-care is neglected. Those who hold off addressing needs until they have a chunk of time or a vacation before addressing their needs is a barrier to self-care.
- Not paying attention to how you are feeling and that you are in need interferes with proper self-care.
- Difficulty admitting that you are in need or asking for what you need contributes to self-neglect.
- Not seeing yourself as a legitimate priority and deserving of care contributes to poor self-care
- Expecting others to read your mind and meet your needs without you ever taking ownership for asking directly interferes with your wellbeing
- Self-care does take some effort and when you are depleted resisting even the most minimal effort may result in self-neglect

### **Strategies in Support of Self-Care**

#### **Pay attention**

The first step in taking care of yourself is really learning to pay attention to you. Paying attention to you may not be something that feels natural. You may not feel comfortable focusing on how you feel or what you need. Making a conscious decision to pay attention to your feelings and needs can help to restore you.



- You might decide to make a ritual that you engage in like checking in with yourself at the end of the day or with your morning cup of coffee.
- You could make a practice of jotting down in a journal each day some reflections on how you are doing.
- You might simply stop to reflect when a feeling comes to your attention and use this feeling as a guidepost that alerts you to a need that requires care.
- Mindfulness meditation is a tool that can help you practice paying attention. Mindfulness helps to grow your self-awareness but also helps to slow you down and bring an attitude of loving kindness to you.
- Pay attention to your physical wellbeing, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and use them to inform you about your need for care

### **Slow Down**

Slowing down isn't just a remedy for avoiding stress and greater disaster it is also the juncture where you reap the rewards of being present to yourself, present to the moment and all the riches of this kind of presence.

- Take a moment, take a breath, find composure before you react to an upset
- If frantically approaching a task at hand, avoid making mistakes because of your feverish pace by focusing on one task at a time.
- Consider letting up on the need for perfection or the constant striving to get ahead. Find comfort in where you are in the present moment
- Plan and purposefully harness the daily opportunities to slow down and make good healing use of the time that you have. There are pockets of restoring time to make use of each day.
- Be present to the beauty and riches in you and around you. Take a moment to reflect and appreciate what is.

### **Brainstorm**

Caring for you may come in many different forms and will vary from one person to the next.

- Develop ideas for self-care that meet physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social care needs. In this way, you are developing strategies or moments of care for the full range of your personal care needs.
- Develop ideas that you do not need a large chunk of time nor are dependent on any one person to achieve.
- Be creative have fun exploring how you might pack magic moments into your day
- If you would like help brainstorming, call the Caregiver Support Line for help.

**You deserve to pay attention to you!**

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274