

# A GUIDE TO HEALTHY CAREGIVING

A caregiver is anyone providing care and support for a family member or friend with an illness or disability. Caregivers can be parents, siblings, spouses, children or friends. They provide assistance with a variety of daily living activities.



## Caregiver stress

Caregiver stress is the emotional and physical strain of providing care. It can take many forms:

- Fatigue
- Depression or anxiety
- Frustration and anger
- Guilt based on unrealistic expectations

## Self-care

Self-care is particularly important for those caring for another person. Activities that promote self-care vary widely and can include something as extensive as taking a vacation, or something small but meaningful, like taking time to exercise, reading a book or getting a haircut. Self-care reduces stress and helps a caregiver maintain a positive attitude.

Self-care is an effective strategy to actively manage stress and effectively care for someone.

## Self-care strategies

- **Plan fun activities:** Schedule time for enjoyable activities unrelated to caretaking. Participate in hobbies, stay active and remember exercise is good for the body and mind.
- **Stress management on the go:** Deep breathing is a simple way to reduce stress during difficult moments throughout the day. When feeling stressed, take three slow, deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling forcefully through the mouth.
- **Social support:** Communicating thoughts, feelings and expectations to family members, friends or members of support groups can reduce feelings of depression, anxiety and isolation.
- **Respite care:** Respite care benefits the whole family by providing a break for the primary caregiver while ensuring the family member with a disability is with a trained caregiver. Contact an Exceptional Family Member Program Family Support service provider to learn about respite care options and resources.
- **Outlook and attitude:** Having realistic expectations and determining what can and cannot be controlled are important in maintaining a positive outlook.



For additional assistance, including specialty consultations, planning tools, non-medical counseling and more, call or visit <https://www.militaryonesource.mil> | 800-342-9647



**EFMP** Exceptional Family Member Program