

WORKSHEET 21

CREATING A SELF-CARE PLAN

Self-care is

- Taking action to maintain or improve your own mental, emotional and physical health, especially during times of stress
- Intentionally doing things that improve your mood and lower your stress levels

Use the following prompts to create a self-care plan. You may know you want to take time for yourself, but it can often be hard to actually find the time to do it if you don't consciously make time or set self-care goals. You may not always be able to keep your plan—don't be discouraged. You can always revisit and modify your self-care goals. **Self-care should help you feel better, not be an additional source of stress.**

Physical Self-care Plan. As a caregiver, if you are not physically well, you will not be able to take care of your family.

Check all the following statements that are true.

- I eat a well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, proteins, whole grains and healthy fats.
- I drink at least eight 8-oz glasses of water or fluid a day (an "8x8" goal).
- I sleep well each night and wake up feeling rested.
- I exercise for 30 minutes at least three times a week.
- I do not smoke or use tobacco.
- I only drink alcohol in moderation.
- I keep up with my own medical needs, such as getting an annual checkup from my primary care provider, and I get regular dental cleanings.

Did you leave statements unchecked? If so, you may need to consider improving those aspects of physical self-care. Talk to your primary care provider about ways to improve your health and well-being.

What are some ways in which you can improve your physical well-being?

Example: Drink more water to stay hydrated.

Write down a few short-term goals to improve your physical well-being.

Example: I will keep a water bottle with me throughout the day to make sure I meet the "8x8" goal.

Mental and Emotional Self-care Plan. Taking care of your mental and emotional health is just as important as caring for your physical health. It's important to take time for yourself each day and to keep up with activities that you enjoy. With the daily responsibilities of caregiving, you may forget to do these things. Make a conscious effort to take time to care for your mental and emotional health.

What activities do you enjoy? Check all that apply.

- Listening to music, playing an instrument or singing
- Reading or listening to audiobooks
- Exercising or participating in group exercise classes
- Playing sports or organized games with friends
- Hiking, fishing or other outdoor sports
- Meditating or practicing yoga
- Painting, drawing or other artistic pursuits
- Journaling or creative writing
- Attending religious or spiritual services
- Activities with friends or family
- Practicing personal care, such as taking long baths, having manicures or using face masks
- Cooking or baking
- Watching movies or TV shows
- Playing video or computer games
- Puzzles
- Yard work or gardening
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Any of these activities can be part of a self-care plan. Pick one or two of your favorite activities and make them a priority in your day-to-day life. Then fill out the following statements to create goals for emotional self-care:

I will set aside time to _____ once a day.

Examples: Drink coffee on the front porch, read a devotional, meditate and stretch, write in a journal.

I will set aside time to _____ once a week.

Examples: Have dinner with friends, attend a religious or spiritual service, go to an art or exercise class.

Change the activity and frequency to accommodate your lifestyle and needs, but do make sure that you make the time for yourself.

Stay-Calm Strategy. When caring for a child with cancer, there will be times that are difficult and emotional. It's unavoidable. Prepare for these moments by having a strategy in place to help yourself calm down if you feel anxious or overwhelmed. Having a plan in place, in advance, will help you better manage unexpected intense emotions.

Try the following strategies:

- Do a breathing exercise.
- Repeat a meaningful mantra, affirmation or prayer.
- Close your eyes and sit in silence.
- Stand up and stretch.
- Take a quick walk outside.
- Call a close friend or family member.

When I feel overwhelmed I will



City of Hope offers videos with more breathing and meditation exercises on their YouTube channel. You can visit this channel at www.youtube.com/user/cityofhopeonline and go to the playlists tab to access the "Living Well" playlist with breathing and meditation exercises.

Ask for Help and Delegate Tasks. As a parent, you may feel that you need to take on every aspect of your child's care alone, but this isn't the case. More than likely, there are friends and family members who really want to help—they just may not know how, so let them know!

What tasks could you delegate to someone else? Use the chart below to write down tasks when you think of them and some friends and family members who can help you with your caregiver responsibilities.

TASK	HELPER	NOTES
Example: Take John to appointment on Monday.	Aunt Susan	Susan doesn't work on Mondays and she lives close by.

Deep-Belly-Breathing Exercise

1. Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Place one hand on your stomach and your other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should not move much.
4. Exhale through your nose. The hand on your stomach should move, and the hand on your chest should not move much. Focus on your breathing and your hands.

You can find a variety of breathing exercises online. Try several different ones until you find one that works for you.