

Are You a Healthy Caregiver?

Many caregivers understand the importance of caring for themselves, and yet, in another breath, say things like, “I feel overwhelmed,” “I’m stressed out,” “I’m too busy to eat, let alone find time to stay healthy,” and “There are so many things to do, how do I make time for myself?” Thankfully, there are many small things you can do to stay healthy, recharge, and minimize feelings of stress.

Start by responding to the statements below to recognize the positive steps you are already taking to ensure you stay healthy, and to identify areas where you might consider action to help keep you resilient.

1. I am satisfied with my overall personal health.
 Yes No
2. I have the skills and information I need in order to give the required care.
 Yes No
3. I maintain regular contact with family and friends and make time to spend with them.
 Yes No
4. I can ask for and accept help when it’s offered. I know I don’t have to, and can’t, do this alone.
 Yes No
5. I am able to communicate effectively with the person I am caring for, as well as with others involved in their care.
 Yes No
6. I am aware of community resources available to help support me in my caregiver role.
 Yes No
7. I am aware of caregiver support groups (locally or online) and/or have a supportive network where I can share my challenges and successes.
 Yes No



8. I make use of respite options available and take breaks from my caregiving responsibilities.

Yes No

9. I have gathered information about the progression of my care recipient's disease so I know what to expect and can prepare in advance as best I can.

Yes No

10. I know how to navigate the healthcare system and who to ask if, and when, I need help.

Yes No

Give yourself one point for every "Yes" answer.

8-10 Points: You are already taking several important actions to take care of yourself and make sure caregiving is sustainable for you. Look closely at statements where you answered "No," and consider whether accessing more resources would be helpful.

5-7 Points: You understand the importance of self-care, but you're not always able to take action to support yourself. Consider any barriers you have to self-care, and ask yourself whether these are external (you don't know about the resources that exist to help you) or internal (you have trouble asking for and receiving support). Sharing the care is essential to finding enough time and energy for yourself. Choose one statement where you responded "No" to work on this week.

Fewer than 5 Points: Without contributing to your own well-being, caregiving quickly becomes overwhelming and unsustainable. Use this list of ten statements as a guide to creating a self-care plan, and start with learning more about the caregiver support resources available to guide you. It will be important for you to identify resources you're not currently using in your social circle, such as family, friends, acquaintances and neighbours, to share the care and create some much-needed space for addressing your own wellbeing.

