

# 4 Ways to Transform Frustration

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*Feeling frustrated trying to manage caregiving and the household tasks?*

*Are you exhausted although your care partner needs your time and energy?*

You are not alone! Caregivers providing practical and emotional support to a spouse or family member often find themselves feeling overstretched at some point, trying to balance the various aspects of life while caregiving. Feelings of frustration can arise from some of these sources:

- The gradual build-up of responsibilities you are now managing. Some tasks you are doing may be ones that are not your greatest strength, or jobs you don't especially find enjoyable. The addition of these extra tasks can eventually feel like a burden mentally and emotionally.
- Feeling that you don't have enough time for the activities you find inspiring. Having large portions of your time dedicated to caregiving, even though you are invested in helping your loved one, can leave little time for nourishing your own well-being.
- Your care partner's disease process might be causing challenging behaviours that are just plain difficult to cope with. Extra reserves of patience are often called for while navigating the re-creation of new routines.

Issues of money, intimacy, and changing roles can bring about lots of questions and frustration. *So how to cope?*

#### **4 Ways to transform frustration:**

1. ***Connect with one thing you love to do.*** That may be a relaxing activity such as journaling, painting, listening to a book on tape. Set aside 15 minutes each day for doing that activity, making it as important as other schedules.
2. ***Pause and breathe mindfully for two minutes.*** When irritation comes up, allow yourself stop and breathe deeply. Try having an affirmation you say silently to yourself, such as ‘I am calm, I am healthy. All is well’.
3. ***Remind yourself that you’re doing your best.*** You are not expected to be perfect in balancing this rather complex set of skills that caregiving calls for. Group members have described it as being a nurse, butler, cook and cleaner all at once! Think of one thing you are doing today that you’re proud of.... start with a small thank you to yourself!
4. ***Practice asking friends and family for help.*** There are often people who want to support you on this journey, and they simply don’t know what might be most helpful. Asking for assistance does not mean that you are weak or incapable- rather, it allows you to get in touch with the tasks or routines that have a draining effect on your energy. Directly communicating how others can help out gives them a chance to express their love for you and your care partner.

You might write a list of items you'd like support with, and invite people to sign up. Items can include: Having lunch with your care partner once a week; taking them for a short outing; calling to check-in when you're out for a few hours; bringing meals over; helping with minor home repairs or gardening.

**Some helpful resources:**

- Here's an article about coping with common caregiver frustrations related to dementia care: <http://www.caregiverstress.com/dementia-alzheimers-disease/common-caregiver-frustrations/>
- A well-written guide called *The Caregiving wife's handbook* by Diana Denholm offers practical tips on coping with the challenges and emotions involved with caregiving.