

Self-Care for the Holidays -By Cassandra Van Dyck

“Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”

- Eleanor Brown

If we based our idea of the holidays solely off of movies, television shows, and radio broadcasts, we might think every December is supposed to be filled with snow, bountiful meals with smiling faces, and mountains of presents. Maybe you're lucky and parts of the month will look like that for you, or maybe you have memories of past years that resembled postcards and films but they feel far away now. No matter what your expectations are, it's sometimes helpful to have someone say what not many do: the holidays can be hard. Fortunately, there are many ways to cope with challenges and to make sure that you're able to soak up some of that holiday spirit for yourself.

Caregivers can experience many challenges during the holiday season. There may be obstacles to navigate, such as managing swelling to-do lists and obligations with the increased expectations of holiday parties and family events. There might be concern about how to incorporate your loved one in to family events while accommodating their needs. You may simply be feeling over-stretched and tired. The following self-care tips can be exercised any time of the year, but may be especially helpful over the next few months.

Share the load.

So much stress and frustration can stem from feeling that you have to do it all and that there is nowhere to turn to for help. Remember that many people are more than willing to lend a hand if given the opportunity and are often happy to do so. Allow them to judge for themselves whether or not they're able to help. Asking for assistance can be made easier when you use tools to help yourself stay organized so others know what to do and when.

www.lotsahelpinghands.com is one tool you can use to share your to-do list. The website provides a user-friendly platform for caregivers to share calendars that help assistants coordinate tasks. You could also try sending group emails or asking someone to help you delegate tasks if you're feeling unsure of how to do so.

Take some time for yourself every day.

This may feel like the hardest thing to do when you're caring for someone else, but it is also one of the best things you can do to support your own well-being. The time you take does not have to be long – even 10 or 20 minutes can make a difference. Spend the time doing something that brings you joy. It may be enjoying a slow cup of coffee, walking around your neighbourhood, reading a good book, or calling a friend that makes you laugh. Whatever it is that makes you smile, prioritize the time and try to do it every day.

Honour your journey.

While the holidays can be a time of great happiness, it can also bring feelings of grief. If this

happens for you, remember to be gentle with yourself. Take the time to honour that what you're going through is important. Try writing it in a journal, talking to a friend or family member, or speaking with a professional.

Share a fun activity with your care partner.

Sometimes shaking up a routine can help shake the blues. Try going for a walk in a new location, colouring, or creating a simple art project together. December also offers many free, fun events, such as the carol ships, craft fairs, tree lighting celebrations, lantern festivals, and parades.