

# SELF CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS: 10 STRESS RELIEF TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS



## Reduce holiday stress with self care for caregivers

The holidays can be a time of mixed emotions and extra stress for caregivers. There are happy celebrations, special traditions, and wonderful memories. But there can also be unpleasant family members, grief for those who have passed, and an overwhelming To Do list.

In the midst of all of this, self care may sound like a silly concept, but it truly is an effective way to reduce stress, improve well-being, and help you find some joy in these challenging situations. And when you feel better, everyone around you will also benefit from that positive energy.

## 10 tips for caregiver self care during the holidays

### ***1. Make time for yourself***

It's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of extra tasks and hassles that the holidays bring. Added on top of regular caregiving responsibilities, it can really amp up the stress.

To counter that, make it a priority to take a little time for yourself to sit quietly, relax, and recharge. Remind yourself that this isn't a waste of time. In fact, taking [brief time-outs](#) can make you more effective and efficient because you won't be so frazzled.

### ***2. Know your priorities***

There are dozens of things going on during the holidays, but it's impossible to do everything without running yourself ragged.

So, take a moment to consider – which are the most important to you? Taking time to consider what gives you the most meaning and fulfillment helps you prioritize activities, events, and even people. That helps you focus your time and energy so you won't feel so overwhelmed and drained.

### **3. Take care of yourself during difficult family interactions**

The holiday season often means spending time with people you may not see the rest of the year. That can mean spending time (or video calling) with family or others who [criticize your caregiving](#), [don't help out](#), or are unsupportive or unkind.

Since you can't simply avoid these people, the best way to protect yourself is to keep contact as minimal as possible and stay neutral and civil. This is not the time or place to hash out bigger issues or vent frustrations. That's unlikely to accomplish your goal and the unpleasant interaction will only make you more stressed and angry.

If you do have run-ins with unpleasant people, walk away as soon as you can and give yourself a little time to cool off and calm down before rejoining the group.

### **4. Make room for grief if you're missing someone who has passed away**

The holidays can be tough when you're missing someone important to you. Consider setting a place at the table, having a moment of silence, or sharing favorite memories as a way to honor them.

If you're feeling sad, remind yourself that it's completely natural and that you don't have to pretend to be cheerful. Give yourself permission to feel your emotions as they are and don't feel obligated to participate in activities if the emotions are too overwhelming.

### **5. Reflect on what you're grateful for**

Practicing gratitude is a [proven stress-buster](#).

It changes your perspective and helps you see that there is always some good in life, even in tough times. To help you focus on the positive moments, jot down 3 things you're grateful for, do a [quick gratitude exercise](#), or tell someone why you're grateful for them.

### **6. Remember that holiday stress will pass**

When you're in the middle of a stressful situation, it can feel like it's never going to end. Keep reminding yourself that this will be over soon, that you have successfully made it through every previous holiday season, and focus on noticing and enjoying as many positive moments as possible.

You could even keep a countdown calendar and mark off each day as a visual reminder that you're getting closer and closer to the end of the festivities.

### **7. Try to understand why you might be feeling negative emotions**

Negative emotions during the holidays could be related to unrealistic expectations of yourself, too-ambitious goals, or just feeling overwhelmed. When you're feeling negatively, think about if it could be caused by one of these things.

You may decide that it makes sense to adjust your expectations to suit the reality of the situation or choose to do a few less activities that are not as meaningful.

### **8. Find reasons to laugh**

Humor is a fantastic stress reducer and an effective way of [coping with challenging situations](#). Take the opportunities to laugh as much as possible during the holidays. And if funny things don't come up naturally, watch a funny movie or show or do something silly like play charades or have a fun sing-a-long.

### **9. Take a few moments for deep breathing, meditation, or music**

To help your body relax and de-stress, try a [simple breathing exercise](#) that can be done anywhere, anytime. Or, try a [2 minute meditation session](#). Other ways to help your body and mind release tension are to listen to music, do a [quick workout](#), or stretch your body.

### **10. Lean on a self care buddy**

When you know you'll be going through a tough time, it can be helpful to have someone to talk to – in person, via phone, or even by text. Let a supportive friend know that you'll be checking in with them when you're feeling down. Reach out to your [online caregiver support group community](#) when you're feeling frustrated and need to vent. Or use the [crisis text line](#) if you're not sure who to reach out to, but need immediate support.

### **Recommended for you:**

- [50+ Best Gifts for Seniors: Things You've Never Thought Of](#)
- [5 Coping Tips for the Overwhelmed Caregiver](#)
- [15 Affordable Stress Relief Products That Help Caregivers Relax and Unwind](#)

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