



**QUICK
GUIDE**

Self-Care & Resiliency for Caregivers

Caregiving for an individual with a brain injury can be challenging and it's critical to take care of yourself on this journey to remain resilient. Psychologists recommend practicing self-care as one way to build resilience because it can help empower you to withstand and learn from difficult and traumatic experiences. Plus, if you are taking care of yourself, the person you are caring for benefits, too.

What does it mean to be resilient?

Resilience is your ability to recover quickly when faced with serious challenges. Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop and is not a personality trait only some people possess.

Why is it so important for caregivers to practice self-care?

A major struggle of being a caregiver is managing stress. When stress builds, it can also affect your resilience and ability to handle difficult situations in the future. But, taking time for yourself and practicing self-care is an easy way to lower stress and build resilience.

Some ways to practice self-care are:

- Take daily walks
- Read a book
- Light a candle
- Listen to music
- Call a friend
- Take a bath
- Cuddle a pet
- Bake a new recipe
- Exercise

Are there things keeping you from taking care of yourself? For example, do you think you are being selfish if you put your needs first, or do you feel inadequate if you ask for help? When you remind yourself you deserve a break, a meal out, time to exercise, extra sleep, you'll be amazed at the difference in your mood and overall happiness.

Caregiving can trigger many difficult emotions including anger, fear, resentment, guilt, helplessness, and grief. It's important to acknowledge and accept what you're feeling, both good and bad. Don't beat yourself up over your doubts and misgivings. Having these feelings doesn't mean you don't love your family member—they simply mean you're human.

What are some ways I can be more resilient?

There are many things we can do to improve our ability to be resilient. Here are a few of our favorite tips and tricks:

-  **Get educated and use community resources.** Learn more about what your loved one is experiencing. Finding information about what is happening now and what will happen in the future with their needs will help you plan.
-  **Take a break from caregiving** and get out of the house. Make a date to go to the movies, take a walk, read a book, meditate, garden, take a long bath, meet a friend for lunch. Do something not related to caregiving that makes you happy.
-  **Get support.** Attend a support group, have a buddy you can call to let off steam and complain. Seek counseling if necessary; it's ok.
-  **Take care of your health.** Go to the doctor, get routine exams and flu shots, get enough sleep, and eat your fruits and vegetables.
-  **Ask for and accept help** when offered. This can be a difficult thing to be comfortable with, but assistance from family and friends can make a world of difference. No one can do this alone.
-  **Forgive yourself**—often. You cannot be a perfect caregiver, all day, every day.
-  **Laugh.** Watch comedies, share jokes with friends; find ways to keep your sense of humor on a daily basis.

Caregiving can be challenging. At the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, our trained experts are available to speak with you about your personal situation and answer your questions. Our services are free and confidential.

To get in touch:

Call **1-800-444-6443**

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