

Caregiver Self-Care

Also available in Italian | Disponibile anche in italiano

This is a resource for the Italian community. It was developed together with caregivers of people living with dementia within the Italian community in Canada. A caregiver could be a family member, friend, or another person who is supporting a person living with dementia.

This resource provides information about:



The importance of self-care for caregivers and examples of self-care activities



The importance of taking care of yourself

Caring for a person living with dementia can be a rewarding and meaningful experience. It may provide an opportunity to give back to family members or friends and strengthen relationships. However, caregiving can also be challenging and demanding of your time and resources.

Self-care refers to investing time and effort into your own well-being. It can include taking care of your physical and mental health, taking breaks from caregiving and getting support, as well as doing activities to reduce stress or have fun.

In the Italian community, it is often preferred that persons living with dementia be cared for by family members. Caregivers may be hesitant to accept help from others, and feel they should manage on their own. Caregiving may affect the caregiver's emotional and mental well-being.

This may manifest as stress, feelings of sadness or depression, anxiety, and a sense of being overwhelmed. Additionally, caregivers may encounter physical health issues, including exhaustion, increased susceptibility to illnesses, and chronic conditions like high blood pressure.

Caregivers also shared that when they don't give themselves a break, they may have less patience and find it more difficult to attend to the needs of the person living with dementia.

Caregivers must prioritize taking care of themselves not only to sustain their ability to support the person living with dementia but to also protect their own health.

“Help yourself, because that will help the other person as well.”

- Caregiver from the Italian community

Self-care activities

Caregivers don't often prioritize taking care of themselves due to lack of time, competing responsibilities, and the sense of obligation to put others first. It's important for caregivers to have honest conversations with themselves, their family members and friends, and healthcare professionals about how they are feeling and what support they need.

Caregivers from the Italian community shared that it takes a community to care for a person living with dementia, including both family members and professional services.

Visit forwardwithdementia.ca to **Learn About Programs and Services**.

It is important for caregivers to find self-care practices that work for them. The next page outlines examples of self-care activities that support mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Some examples include links to other resources for more information and tips. The links are listed in full at the end of this resource.

Caregivers from the Italian community spoke about the importance of doing activities that are fun, or “just for you”. For example, playing cards, bocce, or biscola, getting your hair done, having a coffee with a friend, or watching sports.

Self-care activities



Mental well-being

- Spend time on hobbies or learning something new
- [Solve problems](#) under your control. Break down solutions into small steps
- Plan ahead - for yourself and with the person living with dementia. For example, [advance care planning](#), making a will, and designating powers of attorney
- Develop a [plan](#) in case of absence
- Do activities to promote self-awareness such as journaling or meditating



Physical well-being

- Eat a [healthy diet](#)
- Drink enough water
- [Exercise](#) regularly for both physical and emotional benefits. Consider group exercise programs to socialize.
- Get enough [sleep](#)
- Do activities that make you feel relaxed. For example yoga, deep [breathing](#), [muscle relaxation](#), massages, walking, or gardening
- See your family doctor or other healthcare professional to address health concerns



Emotional well-being

- Spend time with friends and family
- Ask others for help and accept offers of help
- Set boundaries, and say “no” to some requests to preserve your energy
- Use services to take breaks and rest
- Share feelings with others. For example, family and friends, caregiver support groups, or individual counselling



Spiritual well-being

- Find comfort and strength in your faith, religious, or spiritual practices, such as prayer
- Stay connected to your culture and community
- Stay connected to the present moment. Engage in mindfulness practices. Find examples [here](#), and [here](#)
- Spend time outdoors
- Stay true to your values and reflect on what is meaningful to you

“Scheduling some time for oneself first thing in the morning makes the day go better. Doing some physical exercise seems to energize the body and just taking 15 minutes to practice stillness for the mind helps... so we can put the focus on service with strength and courage.
- Caregiver from the Italian community

Linked resources

- “THIS WAY UP” Multilingual Resources - <https://thiswayup.org.au/coping-and-resilience-tools/multilingual-resources/>
- Advance Care Planning Canada - <https://www.advancecareplanning.ca/>
- “Ready, Set, Plan for Care Partner Absence” (Alzheimer Society) - <https://firstlinkontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FL-Care-Partner-Absence-Form-ENG.pdf>
- Canada’s Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- Canada's 24-Hour Movement Guidelines <https://csepguidelines.ca/>
- Free Guided Meditations - <https://www.uclahealth.org/programs/marc/free-guided-meditations/guided-meditations>



Notes

Use this space to write down any notes, reflections, or questions you have about this resource.