

# Caregiver Self-Care

Also available in Punjabi | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ

This is a resource for the South Asian community. It was developed together with caregivers of people living with dementia within the South Asian 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

While many people that care for a person living with dementia do not consider themselves caregivers, caring can involve a variety of responsibilities in addition to other roles a person has. 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 South Asian community, caregiving is often an assumed obligation or duty. Family expectations about caregiving, and balancing roles between work, home and family, can lead to stress for caregivers. Caregivers often feel they should manage on their own, and may not prioritize their own needs, which can affect their 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.**

## 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 South Asian community shared that it is important for caregivers to seek support from family members, their community and professional services. They emphasized that the needs of the person living with dementia will change as dementia progresses, and caregivers should not have to manage on their own.

Visit [forwardwithdementia.ca](https://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 South Asian community spoke about the importance of having fun and “keeping the environment positive” for both themselves and the person living with dementia. For example, listening to music and dancing, watching classic Bollywood movies, playing traditional games like Ludo and Carrom, doing embroidery with friends, or talking about old stories.

## 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.
- Get enough [sleep](#)
- Do activities that make you feel relaxed. For example yoga, deep [breathing](#), massages, walking, a hot shower, 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 or visiting temple/gurdwara
- 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

“I have to be able to do the things I love...running, spending time with my grandchildren. I have to be able to do these things to be a caregiver to my mom.”

- Caregiver from the South Asian 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.