



Autism Resource Center | *Tip sheet*

Self-Care for Autism Caregivers

Raising a child or loved one with a disability can be filled with unique challenges and rewards. While every family's experience is unique, there are some common experiences that many parents and guardians of loved ones with autism share. Understanding these experiences can help you feel less alone and more connected with others who are going through similar experiences.

Your loved one is important to you, and taking care of them can feel all-consuming. However, it's crucial for parents and guardians to take care of themselves as well. When parents and guardians prioritize their own well-being, they are better equipped to support their child or loved one with autism.

Here are some strategies to help:

1. Take time to celebrate the wins.

Did your child or loved one reach a new milestone? Did you get good news from a friend? Did something go well at work today? Take a moment to celebrate! There are a lot of positives to raising a child or loved one with a disability. Don't forget to savor them.

2. Don't beat yourself up when something goes wrong.

All families have setbacks, including yours. Things go wrong. When they do, take a deep breath and remind yourself that it's all part of the journey. Recognize your emotional needs and be kind to yourself.

There will be times when you may feel like you haven't done enough for your child, but remember that you are doing the best you can and be forgiving to yourself.

3. Don't pass up opportunities to spend time with other loved ones.

Some parents and guardians of children with special needs report that they get so focused on interacting with them that they overlook opportunities with other family members.

Carve out one-on-one time to spend with your other children, your spouse or family and friends. This can be a great source of relaxation and reconnection.

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4. *Seek support.*

Support groups can be a great way to connect with others who understand your situation and can provide emotional support and advice.

There may be days when you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, hopeless or sad. It's normal to feel this way, but if it becomes common, seek help from a trusted loved one or a professional therapist. Sometimes talking to a professional can help you process your feelings and develop coping strategies.

Find out what government and community-based supports are available where you live.

5. *Take breaks.*

Many communities have resources such as respite care, Mother's Day Out and other chances to give caregivers some time to themselves. Use this time to focus on other things.

6. *Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your physical health.*

Unfortunately, many caregivers are so focused on their child's needs that they forget to take care of their own health. Make sure you're getting annual physicals as well as medical care when you need it.

Get some exercise. Even when you're busy, you can fit in small things like stretching, deep breathing, taking the stairs or doing a few sit-ups.

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