

Caring for Yourself and Your Loved One While Living with Dementia



SUPPORTING A
CIRCLE OF CARE
SOUTENIR UN
CERCLE DE SOINS

Caring for a loved one with dementia can be demanding on your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual self. While caregiving can provide an opportunity to become closer to your loved one, experiences of disrupted sleep, frustration, anxiety and a difficulty balancing caregiving, work and personal life is common as well (1).

Stress/Burnout:

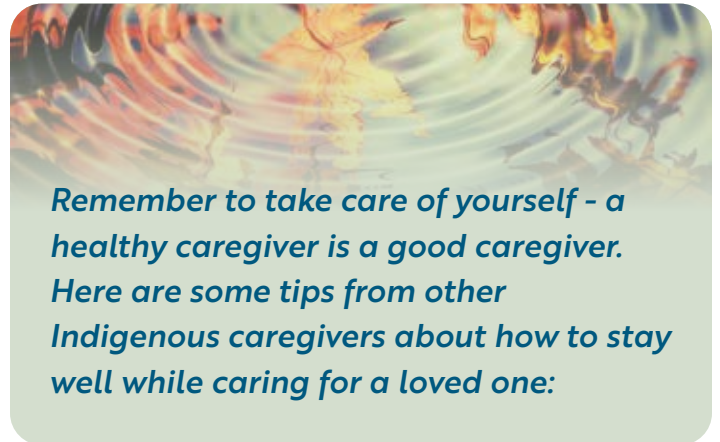
As a caregiver, at times you may experience moments of stress and if this stress goes unrecognized and untreated, it may lead to burnout (2).

Common signs of stress (2):

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired
- Difficulty sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Forgetting responsibilities/reducing time on leisure activities
- Increased drinking or smoking
- Changes to eating habits
- New or worsening health problems

Common signs of burnout (3):

- Decreased energy or constant state of exhaustion, even after taking breaks
- Getting sick easily and often
- Increased impatience and irritability
- Avoiding social connections and/or activities previously enjoyed
- Ignoring personal needs
- Thoughts of hurting the person you are providing care for, or yourself



Remember to take care of yourself - a healthy caregiver is a good caregiver. Here are some tips from other Indigenous caregivers about how to stay well while caring for a loved one:

Take care of your physical health

- Ensure you spend some time during the day to exercise (even if it's just 10 minutes a day), eat balanced nutritious meals, including country food (if you can) and stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water (1)
- Develop healthy sleep habits (4) by developing sleep rituals, going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, avoiding caffeine, food, smoking, alcohol and screens at least 1.5 hours before bedtime (5).



Take care of your emotional and mental health

- Take breaks from caregiving when you can (2).
- To help boost your energy and renew your spirits, do not ignore your social life, schedule time at least once a week to stay connected with friends and family members by calling, video chatting or getting together for some tea (1)
- Develop new hobbies that you can practice during your “me” time including sewing, puzzles, crafting, beading, knitting, or crocheting (4)
- Spend time nourishing your soul by reading, laughing, and singing (4)
- Practice self-love and gratitude by listing all the things you are grateful for (big or small) and all the things you appreciate about yourself (6)
- Watch out for signs of depression and don't delay getting help (4)

Take care of your spiritual health

- Connect with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or trusted loved one to seek guidance or advice
- Carry and share songs, teachings, or ceremonies
- Learn and practice protocols for ceremony
- Speak, learn, and listen to original languages
- Participate in storytelling and singing
- Practice mindfulness by meditating or doing some yoga and slowing down

Caring for your loved one:

If you are caring for someone living with dementia, it is important to keep your loved ones active not only physically but also mentally (7). The activities outlined below are important for keeping your loved one's mind active.



Around the House (7):

- Gardening
- Setting the table, folding laundry (towels, socks)
- Expressive art: colouring, painting, drawing
- Cutting out pictures and making a collage
- Playdough: utilizes skills and senses
- Share memories: make a photo book/ slideshow, or memory box
- Music: listen to music they enjoy, for example, traditional songs or drumming
- Exercise

Important Tips (1):

- Do not hesitate to contact your loved one's healthcare provider if you think they are experiencing depression, loneliness, or worsening dementia.
- Ensure you regularly communicate with your loved one. Speak to them about their needs, pleasures, and frustrations. Pay attention to what they favor when it comes to activities and languages and try to make these choices available.
- Take steps to inform yourself about your loved one's care by attending as many appointments as you can. Try to inform yourself about dementia and its prognosis to help you advocate for their needs as well as your own.
- Do not hesitate to ask for help from friends, family and community members.



Remember that you are not alone! There are many resources out there:

Hope for Wellness Help Line: **1-855-242-3310**

NWAC Elder Support available Monday-Friday from
9-11am EST and 1-3pm EST Toll Free: **1-888-664-7808**

Talk 4 Healing: **1-855-554-4325**

Alzheimer Society of Canada Toll-free: **1-800-616-8816**



Additional Resources for Indigenous caregivers:

Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH) at Lakehead University

- <https://cerah.lakeheadu.ca/indigenous-peoples-health--aging/>
- [Caring for the Terminally Ill: Honouring the Choices of the People](#)
- [Caring for Someone with a Terminal Illness – Care for the Caregiver](#)
- [Supporting the Caregiver and Family](#)

I-ICARE website (Indigenous Cognition & Aging Awareness Research Exchange)

- <https://www.i-caare.ca/>
- [What to Expect after a Diagnosis of Dementia: An Indigenous Person's Guide](#)

Alzheimer's Society of Canada

- https://alzheimer.ca/en?p=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw_sn8BRBrEiwAnUGJDosgVe93HilTvnbWeAA-b8edBXZoEcQtWTRLKppwnLwAWdo7pR2XERoCqgUQA_vD_BwE

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