I feel like there’s no light at the end of the tunnel

I don’t have time to put myself first

I always feel so alone and isolated

I feel guilty taking care of myself before others

I don’t have anyone I can count on or ask for help

It’s all my fault

I’m exhausted and tired of all the drama

I feel selfish putting myself first

I am ashamed that I can’t get it together

Why Should I Put My Oxygen Mask on First?

Self Care is Important

During pre-flight instructions, flight attendants tell passengers that in the case of an emergency they should put their own oxygen mask on first even before helping children because otherwise the passenger will run out of oxygen and be unable to help anyone else. This is true when it comes to self-care because putting oneself first is an unselfish act and a priority. If you do not take care of yourself, you cannot help others. Being the caregiver for someone with a mental health challenge can be very difficult, but you must take a little time for yourself. Self-care can start with just 5 minutes a day!
When you practice self-care, you may:

- Feel calmer
- Feel more grounded
- Feel more energetic
- Feel healthier
- Sleep better
- Eat better
- Have an easier time managing relationships
- Have less anxiety or fewer negative thoughts
- Feel better able to cope with challenges

Self-care is not a one size fits all and what works for you may not work for your friend, but it’s what it does for you that’s important. It refuels you because it supports your physical, mental and spiritual health. Making time for self-care may not be easy, but it’s worth it. Building a new habit or routine takes time. Research has shown it takes at least 2 months to make a behavior a habit. And keep at it because the same research has shown that if you miss a day that won’t affect making self-care a habit.

**Making Time for Self-care**

- Wake up 5 minutes earlier than normal
- Look at how you spend your time and see where you waste time doing something that does not benefit your mental, physical or spiritual health and break this habit
- Take a quick walk at work
- Schedule in “me time” and stick to it
- Pick a self-care activity or area that is most important to you and focus on that
- Plan for big self-care activities such as camping, shopping, dates, classes, travel, massage—whatever works for you
5 Minute Self-Care Ideas...

☐ Breathe deeply
☐ Squeeze a stress ball
☐ Phone or text a friend
☐ Do some stretching
☐ Hum a tune or sing a song
☐ Watch a video clip
☐ Cuddle your pet
☐ Listen to your favorite song
☐ Meditate or a quick mindfulness exercise
☐ Have a treat
☐ Write in a journal
☐ Think about 3 things you’re grateful for
☐ Participate in online or live support groups
☐ Stare out the window
☐ Say no to one thing today
☐ Unplug
☐ List 1 thing you’ve accomplished today
☐ Flip through a magazine
☐ Light a candle or use an essential oil diffuser

Add your own ideas below

☐ ________________________________

☐ ________________________________

☐ ________________________________

Some activities when you have a bit more time...

☐ Take a walk
☐ Listen to an audiobook or podcast
☐ Spend time in nature
☐ Play with your pet
☐ Watch a video or film you enjoy
☐ Take a bath or shower
☐ Read a book
☐ Nap
☐ Exercise
☐ Join a team activity
☐ Start a new hobby or take a class
☐ Volunteer
☐ Play a game
☐ See to your spiritual needs

Add your own ideas below

☐ ________________________________

☐ ________________________________

☐ ________________________________
Parent & Support Group Organizations

- Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH): http://www.acmh-mi.org/
- Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation: http://www.bpkids.org/
- Federation for Children with Special Needs: https://fcsn.org/
- Family Voices: http://familyvoices.org/
- FREDLA: https://www.fredla.org/
- NAMI: https://www.nami.org/
- NAMI Family-To-Family: https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Family-to-Family
- NAMI Family Support Groups: https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/Nami-Family-Support-Group
- National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (NFFCMH): https://www.ffcmh.org/
- Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL): http://ppal.net/blog
- Parents Helping Parents: https://www.parentshelpingparents.org/

RESOURCES ABOUT SELF-CARE

- Active Minds: https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/self-care
- Grow a Strong Family: https://growasstrongfamily.org/
- Psych Central, Caregiver Burnout: The Importance of Self Care: https://psychcentral.com/lib/caregiver-burnout-the-importance-of-self-care