

Freedom *focus*

a  FreedomCare Publication

INSIDE



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Celebrating National Family Caregiver Month

Caregivers are an important part of keeping neighborhoods healthy. Did you know that an estimated 44 million Americans care for a family member, friend, or neighbor, devoting a total of 35 million hours of care? This month especially, remember you are not alone in your caregiving role. There are literally millions of others who can relate to your frustrations, anxieties, and victories. Read on to see some of our favorite tips for staying happy and healthy as a caregiver.

This month, take time to celebrate yourself and other caregivers you know. Congratulate yourself for running your household while still managing care for your loved one. Your role is vital to the health of your loved one, your family, and your neighborhood. At FreedomCare, we celebrate you every day, but especially this month in honor of National Family Caregiver Month.

Can you use this month to commit to a new habit that will keep you feeling healthy this winter season? Or, can you use this month to find a few hours this month to just relax from the holiday hustle and bustle?

We see you and support you, caregivers. Your work is important and we celebrate you!



Attention Caregivers!

You work hard caring for someone else! **Don't forget** to work hard caring for yourself!



Recognize Your Frustrations

Taking care of your loved one, as well as your family, can feel overwhelming at times. That's okay. However, if you don't take steps to address your frustrations, you can find yourself feeling tired, sick, and even angry or resentful.

Notice when you are feeling frustrated and try to discover why you feel that way. Are you frustrated that you can't figure out a way for your loved one to take their medications? If so, could you try giving those medications at another time of day when your loved one is in a better mood? Does it make you feel anxious when your loved one is extra confused in the evenings? If so, perhaps you can set the stage for a more calm evening for both of you by listening to relaxing music and avoiding major tasks.

It's normal to feel frustrated. It becomes dangerous when the frustration goes unresolved and turns into anger toward your loved one, family members, or friends.



Calm Your Anxieties

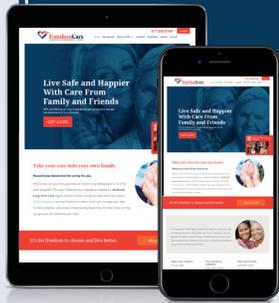
Caregivers are at an increased risk to have depression or anxiety. Putting the needs of others ahead of their own is what makes caregivers great at their job, but it also makes them more vulnerable to mental health stress and conditions.

Be sure you are putting your physical and mental health near the top of your priority list. Keep up with your annual health check-ups and talk to your doctor about your caregiving role. Be honest with any feelings of depression or anxiety, and work with your physician to develop a plan to keep you at your best.



Celebrate Your Victories

Caregiving isn't all frustrations and anxieties. In fact, there are plenty of victories to celebrate! Be sure you are recognizing these moments, big or small. Try keeping a gratitude journal on paper or in an app on your phone. Each day, jot down at least three things you are thankful for. After 30 days, you will be more tuned into the good things that are happening daily with your caregiving. Give it a try and see how you feel!



Take advantage of the online support group & resources available to find support groups and other caregiver resources in your area:

- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving>
- <http://www.nysrcr.org/resources-for-caregivers>

Listening to people going through similar caregiving challenges, and learning from one another, is important for your emotional and physical health!

Stay tuned to hear more about FreedomCare's support group program. We are starting pilot groups in the next few months and will be able to offer you the chance to connect with others soon!

Holiday Stress Busters

The holiday season is here, which means your life is about to get busier than usual. Beat back holiday stress (and sickness) by keeping your celebrations simple this year.

- 1 Ask another family member to host the big meal or celebration.
- 2 Say “no thank you” to some holiday party invites, choosing to relax instead.
- 3 Only make one family favorite dish for the big meal, instead of your usual three.
- 4 Put up fewer holiday decorations, choosing only your favorites.
- 5 Set a gift budget and stick to it.
- 6 Involve your loved one in a few holiday traditions, like baking a favorite cookie recipe or taking a drive to look at holiday lights.
- 7 Let go of the expectation of what the holidays should look like and focus on what they actually do look like this year.
- 8 Find joy in unexpected places.

Tips for Turning Around a Bad Interaction

Caregiving isn't always what you expect it to be, is it? Sometimes, an interaction with your loved one can go downhill quickly. Maybe you feel frustrated or your loved one is confused. Perhaps you feel a wave of sadness or your loved one is not in the mood for care today. Bad days happen to the best of us. Here are a few tips to turn it around:

- ✓ Make sure your loved one is safe.
- ✓ Stop the care task and try it again at another time.
- ✓ Try singing - it can make you feel better and your loved one more comfortable.
- ✓ Leave the room and take three deep breaths before returning.
- ✓ Ask for help from someone else in the home.
- ✓ Tell a joke to break the tension and stress.
- ✓ Try the task in a new way.
- ✓ Ask your loved one for help and let them lead the way.

An Attitude of Gratitude



WE ARE
THANKFUL
FOR YOU!

Your hard work and dedication to your loved one are amazing. What are you thankful for today? Here are a few questions to ask yourself to remember all the good in your life right now.

- What made you smile today?
- What tasted delicious today?
- What was the best part of your caregiving today?
- Why are you thankful to care for your loved one?
- What made you happily sigh today?
- What phrase makes you feel calm or content?

Caregiver Bonus Program

Refer a friend to FreedomCare & get a

\$100 BONUS

once the patient starts receiving care!

Email us at melissa@freedomcareny.com if you want to see a specific topic discussed in FreedomFocus