

# **TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS**

**BY  
ELIZABETH W. BORG, PH.D., N.D.**

Those caring for someone in a long-term capacity of many months and/or years are coping with multiple stressors. Because of the nature of these stressors, chronic dis-stress is likely to occur. Distress can manifest itself in many forms. Common ones include:

- Fatigue and depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Hormone imbalances
- Feelings of anger and irritability
- Digestive disturbances
- Lowered immunity, frequent colds and upper respiratory diseases
- Sexual dysfunction
- Increases in pain and inflammation
- Diagnosed degenerative diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and auto-immune diseases

The longer the stressors affect you and more poorly you react emotionally to them, without utilizing stress management interventions, the more likely you are to get seriously ill yourself over time. Unless you begin to take really good care of yourself, not only will you increase the odds of yourself breaking down, but who then will be able to do your job? You do no-one any good by neglecting yourself, including yourself.

What self-care methods can you utilize on a regular basis to increase your hardiness to the multiple stressors in your life? The following discussion, tools, and resources are the ones I have found most helpful, both personally and with hundreds of my clients over the last 20 years as a wellness coach and therapist. Some of these methods are traditional and some very non-traditional. All of them work, and most are easy to use and relatively inexpensive.

## **PHYSICAL SELF CARE**

Some of the basics here include enough sleep, pure water, and a balanced whole food diet, low in refined sugars and processed fats. Getting some mild exercise such as walking or bouncing on a mini-trampoline (see resources) each day will help you prevent depression, weight gain, and hormone imbalances. Getting organized so that you can shop and prepare simple, nutritious meals of whole foods can be one of the best habits to work towards to increase energy and prevent illness in you. There are many excellent books cited in the reference section at the end that will give you all the details you need to implement this.

Everyone needs a little bit of “downtime” everyday. It is very essential to do whatever is necessary to create this for yourself. Hire someone to help you part-time with your care-

taking responsibilities, get family and friends to take charge for short periods of time so you can take a break from your tasks. When you have your downtime, it is important to engage in an activity that to you is *pleasurable* and just for you. If you go long periods of time without this you will begin to “burn out”, a sign that you are no longer adapting to your life situation.

### **EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE**

Managing your thoughts and feelings in an effective way is crucial for stress management, especially in long term situations where daily strain accumulates.

First, it is important to feel your feelings and give them a name, without judging them as bad and good feelings or judging yourself for having feelings are not okay to have. Emotions are generated a nano-second after thoughts, so it seems that they just appear inside us. Thoughts are very quick to catch, but thoughts are what generate feelings. If the same thoughts repeat over and over along a same theme; i.e., “what am I going to do ....., what if....this can’t be changed...I’m never...it’s my fault...etc., you will generate a disturbing mood in yourself for extended periods of time which can cause a wide variety of physical sensations and illnesses.

Simple behavioral methods such as thought stopping, challenging the thought, understanding that thoughts aren’t necessarily true, recognizing cognitive distortions and inserting more accurate thoughts, meditation, breathing, prayer, visualization methods are other emotional and mental strategies that you can utilize to change your emotional state to one of more calm, relaxed well-being. In the reference section are several great books on managing your mind, communication with yourself and others, and emotional intelligence.

### **ENERGETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SELF-CARE**

In this category of new and exciting tools and therapies for well-being and healing are the practices of acupuncture, energy meridian therapies, aromatherapy, therapeutic massage, music and sound therapies, homeopathy, color, and many other systems using energy modalities for relaxation, healing, and wellness. You can find qualified massage therapists listed on-line in professional association listings or through health food stores. One therapeutic massage every monthly or more often can significantly reduce distress and improve resilience.

Another simple tool that can be used daily or whenever you feel overwhelmed is a flower homeopathic remedy called “rescue remedy”. There are many good books written on the Bach Flower Remedies. They are remedies made with the “energy and vibration” distilled by sunlight from selected flowers. They help to balance emotional states and can help you deal with uncomfortable feelings, especially fear, sadness, grief, anger and guilt. Rescue Remedy is especially good for intense feelings of overwhelm, shock, fear and loss. Put 2 drops in a glass of water and sip. Very simple.

Another simple method that you can learn and apply daily if needed is Emotional Freedom Technique. The website is listed in the resources at the end. Everything you need is on the website to learn this simple method to reduce distress energetically throughout the body-mind. It is based on acupuncture meridians, which are points on the body that hold many kinds of information. When stimulated in certain patterns and ways, this information changes. If the information these points are holding is a disturbance pattern, by interrupting it, you reduce your perception and the body's actual experience of distress.

Caretakers for the long haul need strategies and self-care habits of behavior that will help keep them balanced, supply necessary daily energy for the tasks and work involved, and also help with mental attitude and happiness factors. You will get through the process one way or another. The question is how will you get through it? Quality of life is a necessary factor to consider for yourself as you do what you need to do. Consider making just one or two changes on a consistent basis and watch how you tip toward greater well-being.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Books:**

*Dr. Mercola's Total Health Cookbook and Program.* Dr. Joseph Mercola  
*Messages, the Communication Skills Book.* Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, Patrick Fanning.  
*Take Time for Your Life.* Cheryl Richardson.

### **Websites:**

TheReconnection.com  
[www.Mercola.com](http://www.Mercola.com)  
[www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com)  
[www.eftupdate.com](http://www.eftupdate.com)  
[www.ToolsForWellness.com](http://www.ToolsForWellness.com)  
[www.WellnessEvolutions.com](http://www.WellnessEvolutions.com)

Dr. Elizabeth W. Borg is a psychologist, naturopathic doctor, life coach, speaker and writer. With her unique background and training, she assists people in holistically fulfilling their life potential.

