

Caring for the caregiver

Make yourself a priority.

- Self-care isn't a luxury - it's a necessity. Make time every day to care for yourself.
- Think about the compassion that you extend to others and remind yourself that you also deserve and need that same kind of compassion.

Nurture your body.

- Exercise. Physical and mental fitness often go hand in hand.
- Fuel your body in a healthy way. Get plenty of rest and eat well.
- Breathe. Don't underestimate the power of deep breathing.

Reach out.

- Remember that you're not alone. Maintain a support network so that you can talk with family, friends, colleagues or someone you trust.
- Supportive conversations with those who understand what you're going through may help you reflect on how you feel and how your experiences have affected you.

Practice mindfulness.

- Pay attention to your feelings, thoughts and what you're doing in the present moment. It can help settle the mind and body during periods of stress.
- Try mediation, yoga or other simple stress reduction techniques.

Tune in.

- How do you think you're doing? Sometimes it can help to use a self-assessment tool to determine how well you're coping.
- There are free tools available online.

Draw the line.

- Remember what your role is. Recognize where you 'stop' and where the young person you're helping 'begins.'
- Make every effort to set clear boundaries between your work and home life.

Be kind to yourself.

- You're doing challenging work. Recognize that there are things you cannot control.
- Resist the urge to blame or criticize yourself for what you think you should have done in a given situation.

Do what you know.

- What helps you cope when you're stressed? What activities do you enjoy?
- Focus on healthy activities that bring you comfort and help you to feel calmer and safer when things are difficult.

Recognize red flags.

- Pay attention to what your mind and body is telling you.
- For example, are you dreading work? Unable to sleep? Feeling hopeless? Learn to recognize your warning signs.

Seek help.

- You don't have to manage everything on your own. Connect with your doctor or a mental health professional who is not affected by the situation.
- You may find that seeking help gives you a new perspective on the situation.