

How to Practice Self-Care During Cancer

People deal with a cancer diagnosis in different ways. You might feel overwhelmed with feelings of fear, shock, or anger. You might go into planning mode, learning everything you can about your diagnosis, getting your house and finances in order, and making plans for treatment. Or you might get caught up in meeting the emotional needs of loved ones.

Often, the last person cancer patients take care of is themselves. But it's critical to prioritize your physical and emotional health during this time. Rather than it being a selfish action, it's a practical one: When you practice self-care, you're better prepared for your treatment or recovery journey. You're also more likely to be refreshed and present for loved ones.

These tips can help you recharge and relax during your illness.

Do Things That Bring You Joy

There is no one-size-fits-all joyful activity. For you, it might be gardening; for others, it's listening to music. Think about what restores you. As much as possible, continue doing those things – or introduce some new activities into your routine.

People practice self-care in numerous ways, including:

- Being in nature
- Rereading a beloved book
- Practicing yoga
- Dancing
- Talking to an old friend
- Meditating
- Coloring or knitting
- Spending some time alone

Get Plenty of Sleep

The importance of sleep can't be overstated. Without sufficient sleep, you might have trouble focusing, solving problems, making decisions, or controlling your emotions. Lack of sleep has also been linked to susceptibility to sickness, depression, suicide, and risk-taking behavior.

Of course, sleep doesn't always come easy. In times of stress, it can be hard to fall asleep and stay asleep. Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble sleeping. It might be helpful to keep a sleep diary for a few weeks so that your doctor can better understand how your sleep is being disrupted. He or she might recommend lifestyle changes, prescribe medication, or order a sleep study.

Be Specific in Asking for Help

A common question friends and family might ask you is, "What can I do to help?" People often want to lend their support, but they don't know how. You might reassure them that you don't need help, out of fear of imposing your illness on others or feeling helpless. However, having loved ones help with specific tasks is an ideal opportunity to practice self-care. You might say:

- "You can be my point person and provide updates to our group of friends."
- "Can you pick up Charlie from school at 3 p.m. next Friday?"
- "I could use some help with cleaning and laundry this Sunday."
- "I would just love someone to talk to. Can you call once a week?"

Offering specific helpful tasks is a way to alleviate some of the stress you're feeling while helping your loved ones feel like they're contributing to your recovery.

[Get more self-care advice at CaringBring.org.](https://www.caringbring.org)

Find Emotional Support

There are various ways to get support, including individual or couples counseling, support groups, and peer support. UT Southwestern's [Support Services](#) team can connect you with services that promote well-being and self-care.

Spouses and Partners Should Practice Self-Care, Too

Caregivers face similar problems of burnout, anxiety, and stress. Remind them that their needs are important too, and encourage them to seek out activities that help them recharge.