**10 Simple Steps To Reduce Stress For Working Caregivers**

According to a recent report by AARP and the National Alliance For Caregiving, approximately 60% of those providing care to a loved one are working caregivers. Many working caregivers are perpetually exhausted and feel like they never are doing anything quite “right.” Managing both career and the needs of a sick or disabled loved one frequently feels impossible, especially on days when there’s a surprise late meeting at work or Dad has an unexpected fall. But working caregivers can successfully balance career and caregiving with these steps:

1. Acknowledge that it is normal to question whether or not you “should” be working as a caregiver, especially if you are a woman. For most of history, females stayed home with the kids and then took care of the sick and older loved ones in the family. But both genders who are working caregivers tend to second-guess whether or not they should retire early, go part-time or even leave the workforce completely. While it’s normal to have such thoughts, know that you can continue as a working caregiver if you surround yourself with enough support.
2. Make sure your boss and team know that you are managing a caregiving situation. While they don’t need to know all the details, many of your colleagues will be more understanding of adjustments to your work schedule if they know what you are going through. After all, most of us have gone through a caregiving experience or will at some point.
3. Explore everything your human resources department has to offer. While FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) is a benefit most of us are entitled to which offers 12 weeks of unpaid leave to take care of a loved one, there are often many more options human resources can offer. If you are out of paid sick and personal days, perhaps colleagues can donate sick days so you don’t have to use FMLA without pay. Perhaps there is a compressed work schedule you can take advantage of. There may even be discounts or subsidies offered through your organization that can pay for home care or other services you or your loved one might need.
4. Cancel one thing on your personal or work schedule this week that isn’t essential.
5. Take a 5-minute break during the workday without your cell phone in your hand.
6. Delegate something small either at work or in your personal life each week. In your personal life, you could delegate to one of your kids, your spouse, a friend, or another family member.
7. Take a few minutes to meditate, pray or listen to something inspirational. Or review an inspirational app or cards. Wayne Dyer, Louise Hay, Abraham-Hicks, Ariana Huffington, Gabrielle Bernstein, and Lissa Rankin offer options on YouTube or the app store.
8. Remind yourself that caregiving for your loved one is not your job alone. Make a list of tasks you could use help with. Then circulate that list to family and friends.
9. Figure out a Plan B for caregiving. If Mom needs to go to the doctor and you can’t miss that business trip, who will step in? Who are your backup people? These backup persons could be a combination of family, friends, and paid helpers.
10. Identify a Plan B for work. Since an emergency with your loved one could occur at any time, always have instructions ready for your colleagues in case you need to be out of the office for several days unexpectedly.

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