



Mindfulness Tips for Caregivers

From [Eliana's Light](#) In Collaboration With Rhiannon Landesberg of BreathEd

Caregiving is no easy task. The responsibilities that come with caregiving for another can quickly leave even superheroes like yourself feeling the effects of stress. Over time, stress can have a damaging effect on your physical, mental and emotional health.

Mindfulness is about being in the present moment and accepting it without judgment, instead of allowing thoughts to race into the future or dwell in the past. It involves generating a sense of calmness by focusing the breath and other body sensations in order to quiet an anxious, restless mind. Mindfulness can lead to a feeling of relaxation and a restored sense of well-being.

But there isn't enough time in the day! The demands on your time and energy are endless. Below are some techniques that you can use even on the busiest and most stressful of days.

1. The S.T.O.P Technique:

S: Stop what you are doing for a moment.

T: Take a breath. Concentrate on the flow of your breath in and out.

O: Observe your thoughts, feelings, and physical state. Notice your thoughts and let them be or pass. Name your emotions. Notice your body, its posture. Are you hungry or thirsty? Do you have any aches or pains?

P: Proceed with something that will be helpful to you as you address the particular cause of stress. You might choose to find a friend to talk to, eat a nutritious snack or meal, or stretch to relieve body tension.

2. Put your oxygen mask on first: Being of service is a gift we can offer to ourselves and others. Service is a large part of mindfulness. Through mindfulness we serve ourselves, and as a result, are better able to serve others.

3. Keep it short and simple: Our brains respond better to bursts of mindfulness. Practice being mindful several times a day, as opposed to trying to be mindful for long periods of time. For instance, you can tune into your body, such as focusing on how your shoes feel on your feet in that moment, or how your clothes feel on your body. Taking a short walk and noticing the sights and sounds, or listening to calming music are sweet and simple ways to incorporate mindfulness into your daily life without having to commit too much time.

4. Practice mindfulness while you wait: Perhaps you are spending a lot of time at the doctor's office, in a hospital room, or in the car between appointments. While you are in these moments, you could: turn on a guided meditation on your phone, close your eyes and focus on light filling your body, or count how many breaths you breathe. Depending on your child's age and abilities, you may want to encourage her/him to do these mindfulness practices as well.



5. **Give Hugs:** There are so many reasons to give hugs! Hugging induces oxytocin in the body, which helps to fortify bonding. Hugging lowers stress and blood pressure. A good hug has the power to prompt us towards better posture, deeper breathing, and a more relaxed state of being. A good hug lasts at least 8 seconds!

6. **Start Fresh Every Time:** From a mindfulness perspective, every moment is an opportunity to start again. We can remember that just as the seasons change, the sun rises each morning, and as we take each breath, we have the opportunity to start anew. Each day is a new day to set an intention for mindfulness. And each breath is another opportunity to begin your practice.

The following article from the Child Mind Institute is on how caregivers can ease their stress of caring for a child with special needs through mindfulness and meditation:

<https://childmind.org/article/how-mindfulness-can-help-caregivers/>