

Caregiving 101 – The Big Three

There are many coping strategies for caregivers including support groups, reading, hobbies and connecting with friends and family to reduce stress and maintain a sense of self.

There are **three main strategies that oftentimes get overlooked** yet make significant positive impacts. These successful coping tips do not cost additional money and can change the way we feel every day!

Making the ‘The Big Three’ a priority in your life can improve your quality of life and your ability to be the best caregiver you can be!

THE BIG THREE

1 **Eat Right**

***Perhaps snacking on vegetables could be a healthy change to make!**

Stress-snacking is common, especially among caregivers who are under a lot of constant stress. Eating too much sugar or processed foods increases the risk for depression and lowers energy. Unhealthy eating also leads to weight gain that lowers your self-esteem and increases your risk for heart disease, diabetes, joint issues and other physical problems. Eating enough vegetables and drinking WATER each day increases your energy level and strengthens your immune system.

2 **Exercise**

***Start today and not “another time.”**

It may be hard to find time but it is the best cure for depression and increases your endorphins (“good” coping hormones). Exercise also reduces your risk for falls. Making exercise a priority each day even in small amounts throughout the day can make a big difference in the way you feel. Consider exercise a medication that you must take to stay healthy and reduce stress. If you are not able to exercise on your own as you care for your loved one, find ways to include them. Everyone can benefit from exercise. Find an exercise you ENJOY doing.

3 **Sleep**

***Reducing screen time and caffeine before bedtime and creating a routine can help sleep habits.**

***Talking with your healthcare provider is encouraged should you have concerns.**

Seven to eight hours can be difficult to get, but it is essential. Good sleep helps you function better during the day. Feeling well rested reduces stress and improves memory. Staying on a schedule helps with going to sleep and waking up at the same time.

Remember, it is not selfish to take care of yourself, it is necessary!