

Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB3



Maintaining realistic schedule and expectations

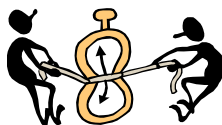
What is a realistic schedule?

The caregiver's daily routine may never be the same as it was before the stroke. Fitting all the responsibilities of providing care into a caregiver's everyday life can be very difficult. Caregivers often expect too much from themselves. It takes time to learn how to become a caregiver. No caregiver is perfect, yet many caregivers feel bad when they make mistakes. Creating a realistic schedule can help caregivers get used to providing care. It can also help caregivers realize what they can and can't do. Here are some strategies that you can try:

- Make a schedule of activities that you did on a typical day **before the stroke**. (Use the worksheet on the next page of this tip sheet).
- Make a schedule of activities that you are now doing on a typical day **after the stroke**.
- Compare the two. Can you do both of the schedules now? Many caregivers try to take on all the new activities that are needed to help the survivor without letting go some of their old activities. It is impossible to do both.
- Cross off all the activities on the schedule of activities that you did **before the stroke** that are no longer important to you.
- Cross off all the activities on the schedule of activities that you are doing now, **after the stroke**, that you can do without.
- **Make a new schedule** with the activities that you have left from the two schedules. Is the new schedule possible? Are there enough hours in the day? Are there more things that you can cross off?

A Realistic Scheduling Worksheet

Developing a new schedule of activities			
A typical day for me before the stroke.	A typical day for me now after the stroke.	My new, practice schedule.	My new, realistic schedule.
6A	6A	6A	6A
7A	7A	7A	7A
8A	8A	8A	8A
9A	9A	9A	9A
10A	10A	10A	10A
11A	11A	11A	11A
12Noon	12Noon	12Noon	12Noon
1P	1P	1P	1P
2P	2P	2P	2P
3P	3P	3P	3P
4P	4P	4P	4P
5P	5P	5P	5P
6P	6P	6P	6P
7P	7P	7P	7P
8P	8P	8P	8P
9P	9P	9P	9P
10P	10P	10P	10P
11P	11P	11P	11P
12Midnight	12Midnight	12Midnight	12Midnight
1A	1A	1A	1A
2A	2A	2A	2A
3A	3A	3A	3A
4A	4A	4A	4A
5A	5A	5A	5A
Cross off activities that are no longer important to you or the survivor.	Cross off activities that you and the survivor can do without.	Include activities that are not crossed off from the other schedules. Are there more activities that you can cross off? Did you include time for rest? Did you include time for positive activities for yourself?	Share this schedule with family and friends. Any way they can help? Share this schedule with the doctor and other professionals. Be flexible. Be realistic about things you can and can't do. Control your emotions when things go wrong.



- Give yourself permission to cross off activities in your daily schedule that you cannot get to. Do not expect to be able to do everything when there are only so many hours in the day. **Most of all, be sure that you have time for yourself worked into your new schedule!** If you try to do too much, you will get tired and run down. If you do not have any positive activities that make you happy, you may put yourself at risk for depression. You cannot be a good caregiver if you get run down or sick from trying to do too much. A depressed caregiver can cause problems as well.
- **Share your new schedule with your family and friends.** It is important that they see all that you do. Give to family and friends some of the activities that you cannot do. Family and friends are usually willing to help if they know what you need them to do. Have them go to the grocery for you. Perhaps do the dishes or make a meal now and then. Learn how to work family and friends into your schedule so that they can take care of some of the activities and allow you to rest.
- **Share your new schedule with the doctor and other professionals.** They may have ideas to help you. Some activities may not be necessary. Other activities may need to be added.
- **Be flexible.** Be willing to change your schedule as activities and needs change. Don't be down on yourself if you did not get to all of the activities you planned in a single day. Some things take longer than you might expect.
- **Be realistic in what you can do.** Look down through the list of common unrealistic expectations that caregivers often have. (See *next page*)

Common unrealistic expectations that caregivers have. Put an X beside all that you have. Fill in other unrealistic expectations you have.

- ☐ Expecting immediate success
- ☐ Expecting the survivor to be more motivated
- ☐ Expecting others to understand everything
- ☐ Expecting to know how to handle every situation
- ☐ Expecting regular appreciation and positive comments from others
- ☐ Expecting specific solutions from health care professionals
- ☐ Expecting continual feedback on how you are doing
- ☐ Expecting that caregiving will cure the stroke
- ☐ Expecting that you have to be cheerful or positive all of the time
- ☐ Expecting that you can do everything you did before the stroke
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____

Do you have a lot of unrealistic expectations of yourself? Write down all of your expectations of yourself, including the unrealistic ones. (Use the worksheet on the next page).



Review your list as if you are a dear friend trying to comfort a fellow caregiver. Would you expect these things of someone else?

Make a new, more realistic list of things you should expect of yourself. Think about your new list. Is it realistic to expect yourself to do these things? Did any unrealistic expectations creep into your new list? How realistic are your expectations about specific things? Are your expectations too general?

Be fair to yourself. When you set up expectations for yourself that cannot be met, the result is usually negative emotions such as depression, sadness, frustration, anger, or worry. Avoid these emotions all together by setting more realistic expectations of yourself.



- **Control your emotions when things go wrong.** Sometimes caregivers can't meet the expectations that they make for themselves. This can create a variety of negative emotions. It is very easy for caregivers to get discouraged or upset about not getting everything done that they wanted to do. It is easy for caregivers to feel overwhelmed.
- **Dealing with your thoughts and emotions.**

In this TASK III Resource Guide is a workbook called, ***"Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB6. Stress Management Workbook for Caregivers and Survivors."*** (See the tab "SB6"). This workbook has many strategies in it that can help you deal with negative emotions that you have about unrealistic expectations. Work through this workbook with your unrealistic expectations as your problem.

The workbook can help you to identify negative thoughts and change them to more realistic, positive thoughts. Positive thoughts lead to more positive emotions.

Also, take a look at Tip Sheet #27 *"Dealing with my Own Emotions While Providing Care."* This tip sheet can:

- Help you identify the emotions you are having about your expectations
- Help you determine your level of depression
- Give you some suggestions on how to think more positive or how you can seek treatment.

Don't be afraid to call a doctor or another health professional to help you deal with the emotions you are having. Medications and psychological counseling can be very effective. Negative thoughts and emotions are difficult to control on your own.

How can I as a caregiver use scheduling strategies and manage unrealistic expectations?

Keep the “realistic scheduling worksheet.” When you are feeling like you have too much to do, make a new schedule. Don’t be afraid to cross off things that are not important.

Keep the “developing realistic expectations worksheet.” When you can’t do what you expect of yourself, think about what you would say to a fellow caregiver in your situation. Learn to be a friend to yourself.

When you are having trouble controlling your emotions, work through the workbook “SB6 Dealing with Emotions after Stroke” and Tip Sheet #27 “Dealing with my own Emotions while Providing Care.”

When do I need to contact a professional?

Contact a professional anytime that you are having trouble keeping up with your schedule, when you are not able to control unrealistic expectations of yourself, or when you are having trouble controlling your emotions.

Contact your doctor or a counselor if you are having negative thoughts that you can’t control. Don’t be afraid to call a doctor or another health professional to help you deal with the emotions you are having. Medications and psychological counseling are very effective. Negative thoughts and emotions are difficult to control on your own.

Last, but not least, don’t forget to give yourself credit for all of the good things that you are doing.



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1P	1P	1P	1P
2P	2P	2P	2P
3P	3P	3P	3P
4P	4P	4P	4P
5P	5P	5P	5P
6P	6P	6P	6P
7P	7P	7P	7P
8P	8P	8P	8P
9P	9P	9P	9P
10P	10P	10P	10P
11P	11P	11P	11P
12Midnight	12Midnight	12Midnight	12Midnight
1A	1A	1A	1A
2A	2A	2A	2A
3A	3A	3A	3A
4A	4A	4A	4A
5A	5A	5A	5A
Cross off activities that are no longer important to you or the survivor.	Cross off activities that you and the survivor can do without.	Include activities that are not crossed off from the other schedules.	Share this schedule with family and friends. Any way they can help?
		Are there more activities that you can cross off?	Share this schedule with the doctor and other professionals.
		Did you include time for rest? Did you include time for positive activities for yourself?	Be flexible. Be realistic about things you can and can't do. Control your emotions when things go wrong.

Developing realistic expectations of yourself.

List what you expect of yourself as a good caregiver.

List what you would expect of a fellow caregiver in the same situation.

List what you would expect of yourself now. Be realistic and fair to yourself.

Are these expectations realistic, or are they expectations of a “superhero”?

Are these the same expectations you would have for yourself?

