

Tip Sheet #32



Keeping My Energy Level Up

Caregiving is hard work and takes a lot of energy. You need to take time to recharge your batteries. You need to get enough sleep. Even if you feel guilty taking time for yourself, the stroke survivor will benefit by having a caregiver who is not worn out.

What about keeping my energy level up?

- Taking time for yourself will help you more than you may realize.
- Set realistic goals for yourself. Determine what is most important. Ask other people for help. See **Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB3. Maintaining realistic schedule and expectations.**
- Exercise daily.
 - Think about walking, bicycling or swimming.
 - Exercise gives you a break and is good for your body.
 - Exercise fights depression.
 - Exercise helps you keep your health and energy up.
- Eat a healthy diet.
 - Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
 - Take a multivitamin if your doctor approves.
- Get a check up from a doctor. Maybe you are tired because of a heart condition, low blood pressure, low blood count, or other condition. See **Tip Sheet #31 Taking Care of my Own Health and Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB7 Goal Setting: Taking care of your Health.**
- Schedule free time.

- Say yes to family or friends who offer to stay with your survivor.
See Tip Sheet #29 Finding the best way to ask family and friends for help.
- Take pleasure in your hobbies. Read a book or see a movie.
- Plan a vacation.
 - This can be as short as a weekend or longer.
 - Respite care can take care of your survivor while you are gone. A family member may stay in your home while you are gone. You might use an assisted living center or extended care facility. Even getting out for a couple of hours can help. **See Tip Sheet #26 Finding care while I am away.**
- Look for ways to simplify your life.
- Try relaxation strategies. **See Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB6. Stress Management Workbook for Caregivers and Survivors** at the beginning of this notebook.



Relaxation Take the time to completely relax your mind and every muscle in your body. This will give you the chance to release tension so you can think more clearly. Try this exercise for about 10-15 minutes whenever you feel the need.

1. Find a comfortable chair, recliner, or couch in a quiet room.
2. Think about what is bothering you. Then, put these thoughts out of your mind.
3. Think about your toes. Relax them.
4. Relax your legs, knees, thighs, and hips.
5. Relax your back and all along your spine.

6. Relax your shoulders, arms, and elbows.
7. Relax your wrists and fingers completely.
8. Relax your neck and the back of your head.
9. Relax all the muscles in your face. Your eyebrows, forehead, and cheeks. Allow your jaw to relax.
10. Relax every muscle in your entire body. Make yourself feel heavy.
11. Take a deep breath in, then let it out slowly.
12. Take another deep breath in and slowly out. Think to yourself, "Breathe in with the good, out with the bad."
13. Think of a place you would like to be. Visualize yourself there.
14. Continue relaxing, deep breathing, and visualizing yourself in a place you would like to be for about 10 –15 minutes.



- **Get plenty of sleep.** Lack of sleep causes stress and illness. Put an X beside the strategies that you can do to improve your sleep.

___ Most adults need about 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night.

___ Lack of sleep causes stress and illness.

___ Sleep when your survivor is sleeping.

___ An occasional nap can keep your energy up. Avoid taking a nap after 3P however.

- ___ Set a good sleep routine. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Just as you would set an alarm to wake up in the morning, set an alarm to go to bed each night.
- ___ Use light blocking curtains to keep the room dark.
- ___ Keep the bedroom cool.
- ___ Avoid caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea) in the afternoon or evening.
- ___ Avoid alcoholic drinks before going to bed.
- ___ Avoid drinking a lot of water or other beverages before bedtime.
- ___ Avoid large meals before bedtime. Can cause heart burn or indigestion.
- ___ Avoid television, computer, tablet, or smartphone right before bed. The light from these devices can interfere with sleep.
- ___ Do something relaxing before bedtime (e.g., reading or listening to calm music)
- ___ If you can't sleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing, then try again.
- ___ Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble sleeping. You might have a sleep disorder or need medication. You might have "sleep apnea" where you have trouble breathing at night.
- ___ Other strategies _____
- ___ Other strategies _____

How can I learn more about keeping my energy level up?

- Spend a little time planning how to do the things you like. **See Tip Sheet #33 Keeping my social life going.**
- Look for exercise classes or programs at convenient times.
 - Park programs, YMCAs or local gyms have classes at different times.
- Join a support group for caregivers (see below). **Tip Sheet #8 has a list of support groups.**

When do I need to contact a professional about my energy level?

- Contact a professional if you have any of these problems for longer than a few weeks.
 - Little interest or pleasure in doing things
 - Feeling hopeless
 - Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
 - Feeling overly tired or having no energy
 - Poor appetite or overeating

Where do I find more information about keeping my energy level up?

- Check the newspaper for information about classes or hobbies.
- Check with local hospitals for community education classes or exercise programs.
- Contact the stroke family support network.
 - Call 1-888-478-7653 and ask for the Stroke Family “Warmline”, E-mail strokeconnection@heart.org, or Visit the American Stroke Association web site at www.strokeassociation.org
- Join a support group either in your community or online (See **Tip Sheet #8 Where to Find Resources** for a list of support groups).