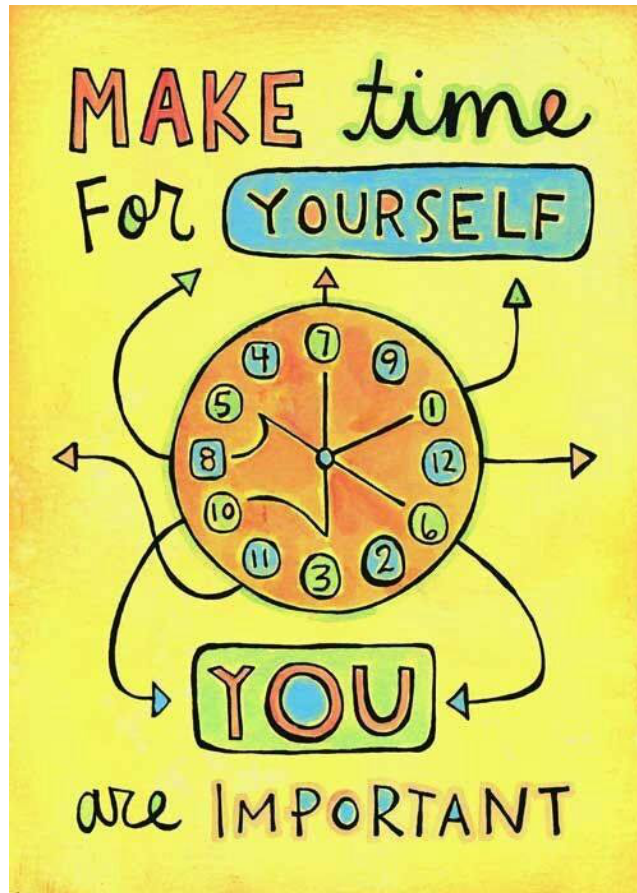


Pocket Sized Mindfulness for People who Care – Week 3 Handout



In today's society, there's an urge to keep going, and a sense that our personal wellbeing and good mental health are not worth looking after. '**Indulgence**' is a word some people may use for it. The '**exhaustion funnel**' describes how we can be pulled into exhaustion when we fail to care for our own emotional needs.

The concept was developed by Prof. Marie Åsberg at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

Exhaustion funnel



The top circle represents how we are when we lead a balanced and healthy life. As things get busier or our caring responsibilities increase, many of us tend to give up the things which are important to us. The circle narrows, illustrating the narrowing of our lives. But if the stress is still there, we give up more – and more. The circles narrow further. Notice that very often, the very first things we give up are those that nourish us the most but seem “optional”. The result is that we are increasingly left with only work

or other stressors that often deplete our resources, and nothing to replenish or nourish us. It is often committed and conscientious people, who are likely to burnout. The reality is that we all need a respite to nourish and refuel.

How to make time for ourselves

When caring for a loved one, it can be a struggle to find a balance between providing care and attending to your own and your family's needs. You may also be missing the non-caregiver relationship you once had.

We know caring for a loved one can take a toll, and it may seem selfish to want some alone time. However, taking time for yourself is a vital part of being a caregiver. It will help you prevent burnout and exhaustion while ensuring your family member gets supportive care. It can even remind you to spend quality time with him or her as a companion, rather than simply checking tasks off the list to meet his or her needs.

How to care for yourself, when there is no time to care for yourself?

It can be a challenge to find time (and energy) to look after ourselves when we're caring for someone else. Prioritising our wellbeing can all too often fall to the bottom of the list - or off the list.

What is micro-respite?

When we don't have much time on our side, sometimes, short 10 or 20-minute breaks are all we can fit in. We've called these small moments of wellbeing "micro-respite".

What are your little "time outs"?

Little time-outs can be five or 10-minute moments you like to take to yourself.

10 minutes of replenishment is like popping new batteries in a toy, petrol in our car or popping our phone on charge!

Examples of micro-respites

- Drinking water (30 seconds throughout the day) can help rehydrate us and sends an important message to our mind that we matter and deserve to be looked after too.
- Sitting briefly to enjoy a drink of our choice.
- Taking a moment to listening to music we enjoy.
- Doing a crossword or puzzle.
- Taking a sensory minute - Pause. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing. It can be when you're hanging the washing out. Closing your eyes, feeling the sun on your skin, listening to the birds, feeling the breeze, smelling the clean clothes or cut grass.
- Exchanging a couple of text messages with a friend.

Take care of your own physical health

You can't take care of those around you if you don't take care of yourself. When you're busy and working hard to provide for others, you need a strong foundation.

There are a few ways to focus on your physical wellness:

- **Move.** Try to move daily, even if it's going for a walk or doing some gentle stretches.
- **Rest.** Most adults need around 8 hours of sleep each night. If this is very difficult, short naps during the day can be a good way of topping up your rest.
- **Don't ignore health niggles.** Carers are more likely to ignore on-going health concerns, make an appointment with your GP if you have some health issues which have been on-going and not resolving.

Find support with friends, family or a care giving group

When you start to feel overwhelmed, you shouldn't feel like you have to keep it to yourself. Talking with others who are "in your shoes" can help relieve the stress you're under as well. Check your area for groups of people going through a similar

experience. You may even be able to find a group online. No matter how you seek support, you don't have to do anything alone.

Don't be afraid to ask for a little extra help

Asking for assistance with the daily tasks of caregiving is one of the ways you can help yourself. You may feel as if it's all your responsibility, but it's important (and okay) to have someone else take over a few jobs, so you can have some "me" time.

A paid carer, friend, or family member can provide companionship, transportation, assistance with errands, housekeeping, meal prep, medication reminders, personal care, and more for your loved one while you take the time you need to rest and recharge.

All things pass – Lao Tzu

All things pass

A sunrise does not last all morning

All things pass

A cloudburst does not last all day

All things pass

Nor sunset all night

What always changes?

Earth..sky..thunder

Mountain..water

Wind...fire...lake

These change And if

these do not last Do

man's visions last?

Do man's illusions?

Take things as they come.

All things pass.

