

Boomer Women: The Ultimate Caregivers

Fifteen Tips for Caring for Yourself

“I don’t know what to do. I need to be in class, but my daughter’s day care provider is sick. She needs a sitter for my grandson. Dad also needs a ride to his doctor appointment today. I’ve made the decision not to attend class, but I’m not sure who to help. Do I pick up my grandson and take him to dad’s appointment with me?”

These are words of a boomer woman at midlife who went back to school to become a nurse. Being a member of the sandwich generation can be overwhelming. When we include our spouses and selves, we are often caring for four generations. We’ve got Mom and Dad, our spouses and siblings, our children and their children, and lastly, ourselves. Our sandwich is piling up. I refer to us as a club sandwich with boomer women often squished near the middle piece of bread while loved ones chomp away at us.

This is reality for boomer women. We multi-task to survive. You can find us sitting at the red light while talking to Mom’s doctor, with our college age son beeping in to see if we could please send the bat bag he forgot to take back to school. HELP. We feel as though we are no longer members of the human race. We now belong to the rat race and we don’t like it. What can we possibly do to give ourselves the occasional breaks we need? What can we do to lessen our burden? How do we embrace caring for others while caring for ourselves?

Here are 15 tips to remind you that we must take time to care for ourselves or we will no longer be of help to our loved ones due to burn out.

- **Reduce stressful situations by saying no.** Perhaps you can run that errand for Dad but you can’t do it until the weekend while you are running your own errands. Maybe you can’t baby sit your grandchild at her home, but you can watch her if they bring her to your home for the evening.
- **Tell your grown child that she may have to hire a babysitter.** As much as you love your grandchildren, you can’t be expected to baby sit every time they need you.
- **Say no to things that are no longer rewarding.** Perhaps it’s time to step down from being the neighborhood association secretary or the Sunday school teacher. There is a season for everything.
- **Ask for help without feeling guilty.** Perhaps there’s a sibling who isn’t pulling their weight. Have an honest conversation with them and let them know they are needed. Try calling a local eldercare agency to see if they have services to help with small jobs concerning Mom and Dad. Hire a maid to clean your house when you just can’t stand the mess any longer.
- **Surround yourself with a network of supportive people** who will listen and allow you to feel heard.

- **Plan a Girl's Night Out** because you can be certain your friends will be able to relate and empathize. Recognize you are not alone.
- **Enlist help around the house.** There's no reason teenagers can't do their own laundry or clean their bathrooms. Make food lists and have your child who just got their license do the food shopping.
- **Spend alone time with your loved ones.** Plan a date with your hubby, a movie with your daughter, or lunch with Mom. Do something fun that has nothing to do with the nitty gritty of care giving.
- **Escape** by reading a good book or watch a movie.
- **Get Outside.** There's something about the great outdoors that's healing. Go alone or take your hubby, dog, kids, or grandkids. Walk, run, garden, or simply sit in a chair while taking in the sights and sounds. Feel the breeze and revel in it.
- **Visit your doctors.** Keep up with your own doctor appointments. Don't put off your annual physicals or visits to the dentist, gynecologist, etc. Preventive medical care is essential.
- **Eat well and exercise often.** Be careful not to skip meals. Make sure you begin the day with a healthy breakfast, followed by a healthy lunch and dinner. Walking with a friend is therapeutic, especially if they too are a boomer woman.
- **Take a deep soaking bubble bath** before jumping in bed. It relaxes your muscles and prepares your body for rest.
- **Spend time in prayer each day.** If you don't have time to do this while you're at home, at least listen to a spiritual radio station or CD that allows the spirit to enter in and give you the much needed peace you deserve.
- **Count your blessings.** Take time to make a list of what you have to be thankful for each day. It's worth it. It helps change your focus from the negative to the positive.

Attitude has a lot to do with how you view your care giving roles. If you count your blessings each day, you may recognize how grateful you are for what you have. To give an example of how that works, look at the above list and begin giving thanks.

I am thankful:

- *My parents are still living.*
- *My grandchild lives nearby so I can be an integral part of her life.*
- *My child was able to marry and get a job in the town in which I live.*
- *I have choices and can choose what committees and functions I want to be involved with.*
- *I have siblings who can help share the load.*
- *My girlfriends who understand what I am going through and can offer much needed words of wisdom.*
- *My teenager is finally driving and can help with the errands.*
- *My husband knows when I need a break and is willing to steal me away to be alone with him.*
- *All the authors and screenwriters who provide much needed escapes from reality.*

- *His beautiful creation that clears my head and allows me to focus on the outdoor beauty.*
- *Doctors and nurses who are capable of sharing what I need to do to remain healthy.*
- *Good food and the company of loved ones with which to celebrate.*
- *My healthy body that allows me to walk and get the exercise I need to release tension.*
- *Hot baths, comfy beds and someone to snuggle with at the end of the day.*
- *I have a loving God meets me very time I call upon Him.*

While care giving is certainly something that can be trying at times, be sure you keep a healthy perspective and remember that it is an honor to care for loved ones. Just be sure you continue to care for yourself.