

# Taking care of you, the caregiver

Caring for a child undergoing a transplant requires a lot of energy. You might feel like you have to do everything—for the patient and your family. Give yourself permission to take care of “you,” so you’ll have more energy in the long run.

## Quick ideas to relax and recharge

- Find a buddy. If you like talking with someone else—ask if you can eat meals together or go for a walk.
- Take some time out for yourself. Pick a time every day (and remind yourself it’s OK) when you are going to take a short walk, get a cup of coffee, read a book, play games, or anything that helps you relax.
- Ask a friend if they will be there just to listen. It’s nice to have someone you can call, to say what you are really feeling.

## It’s not all important—learning to let go

- You’re probably in charge of a lot, but you can’t do it all. Figure out what matters and what doesn’t, at least today.
- Start by making a list of what’s most important for you to do. What do you need to do to take care of your child and any siblings or family members? Don’t forget to include yourself on the list.
- Make a second list of things that are important, but should get done (like household chores, projects, volunteer activities, social engagements, etc.) Then decide what can be put off, delegated or ignored.
- Most importantly—give yourself permission to save your energy for what really matters most to you.

“Taking good care of yourself is going to help you take really good care of your child.”

—Sue, social worker

## Not enough help? Too much help?

- Some caregivers find they don’t ask for enough help, others can be overwhelmed by too many offers of help. Either way, find the easiest way for you to delegate tasks to friends and family members.
- When someone asks how they can help, give them something specific to do.
- Make a list and keep it handy. Organize tasks into categories, such as: help at the hospital, help at home, help with shopping, meals, transportation, etc.
- If you are overwhelmed by too many offers of help, then ask someone else to coordinate the help. You can direct the offers to this person, instead of figuring it all out yourself.
- Contact service organizations like churches or community groups for help.
- Check out the online tool for scheduling help, [www.lotsahelpinghands.com](http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com).

## Find support

- Ask a friend or family member to be your advocate—someone who can keep an eye on you and help you get the support you need.
- Ask your transplant center about resources for transplant caregivers, including support groups or counseling services.
- Join a support group online.
- Work with a child life specialist or other trained professional to work through difficulties your children might be having.