

Self-Care Advice for Parents with a Child in Crisis

The importance of caring for yourself:

Caring for a child or teen in crisis is stressful and can be physically and emotionally draining. There can be much uncertainty and fear. You might feel guilty or selfish acknowledging your own fatigue. Taking care of your own health and psyche will allow you to be more fully present for your child and other loved ones. You will also be modeling health-seeking behavior. Remember the lesson from any airplane flight you have taken; put on your oxygen mask first before helping a child put theirs on. Self-care is not optional. Some practical suggestions for self-care include:

- Reach out to supportive family and friends, religious or spiritual sources of support and solace. People care. Talking about your experiences, reactions, and feelings can be very healing.
- Recognize that you may be ‘burning the candle at both ends’. Plan for and allow yourself to “crash” at some point and get rest.
- Be patient with yourself; you may be distracted and not able to function as efficiently as usual
- Let others do their part – accept help when offered.
- Keep up your own good health with exercise and healthy meals; avoid numbing the pain with excess alcohol, caffeine, or drugs.
- Participate in stress-relieving process, whether individually or in a group; for instance, Mindfulness Meditation, caregiver support groups or supports provided by NAMI Stanislaus.
- Keep a journal. Write in it if you can’t sleep.
- Go for walks (exercise) – but don’t overdo it.