

# VA Caregiver Support Program Caregiver Respite Tool: Exploring Your Goals



## Why Are We Doing This?

VA recognizes the importance of you as a caregiver and as a partner in your Veteran's care. VA has created this tool to help you incorporate respite into your life. Respite care allows you, as a caregiver, time away from your caregiving responsibilities. We understand finding time for yourself can be difficult and this tool is designed to help define who you are as a caregiver and take action steps to finding time for you. We know that finding time to complete an exercise like this may feel overwhelming, **so take your time with this tool. Complete it over a few days or weeks.**

## Part 1

**Instructions:** Part 1 of this tool will walk you through who you are as a caregiver and who you are outside of your caregiving role. You will explore how you care for yourself and who in your life can provide support.

### Who Am I?

**Who am I as a caregiver?**

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Patient, kind, an advocate, persistent, loving, helpful, cheerful, funny

**Who am I outside of caregiving?**

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Artist, grandparent, parent, sibling, partner, dog lover, cat lover, musician, volunteer



What brings me joy?

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Working in my garden,  
reading mysteries,  
antiquing.

What matters most to me?

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Family, partner, faith,  
pets, grandchildren

What do I want my health for?

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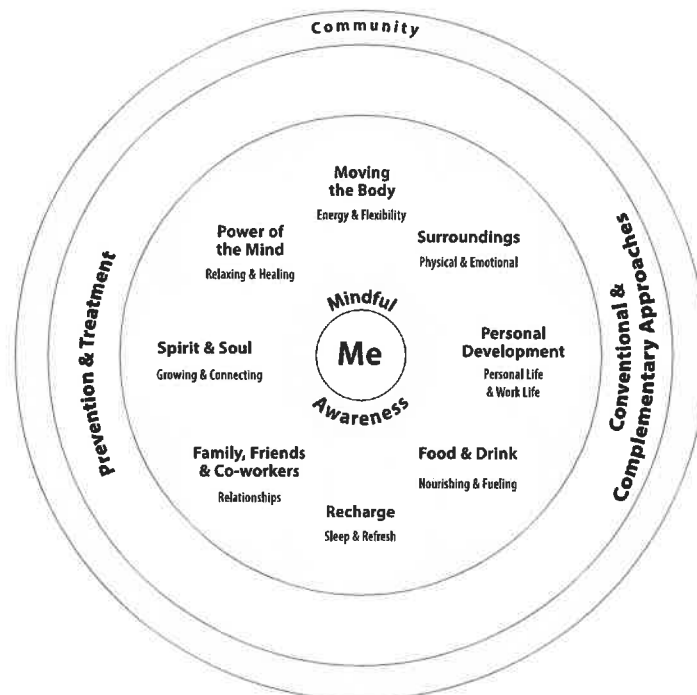
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To walk my  
grandchildren down the  
aisle, to be able to keep  
caring for my partner, to  
play with my children.

The **Circle of Health** helps you explore connections between important aspects of your life and your health and well-being. Improving one area can benefit other areas and influence your overall physical, emotional, and mental health.

**Instructions:** Shade what you do best in your favorite color, and in another color shade what you want to work on.



If you want more information about the Circle of Health please check out:  
<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/index.asp>

# How do I care for myself? What activities am I doing right now?

## Physical health

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Regularly seeing a healthcare provider, moving the body, hydration and nutrition.

## Social health

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Have lunch with a friend, see a movie, blog about my experience, date night, texting friends.

## Spiritual health

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Meditation, prayer, ceremonial practices, or spiritual fellowship.

## Mental/emotional health

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Mindful awareness, counseling, support groups, journaling, talking with trusted people, personal intimacy.

## Sleep health

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Routine sleeping habits, listening to calming sounds at night, sleeping in my comfy bed, limiting caffeine in the afternoon.



**Who are my people?** These are the people who I can go to for emotional support, distraction, laughter/humor, venting, sharing love, or who may give me a break or help with day-to-day tasks.

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## Emergency Contact

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# Part 2

*Instructions:* Part 2 of this tool will help you explore your internal supports, name the people who can help you take a break, and ask for what you need. You will then identify formal supports to discuss with VA.

## Internal support (*I have total control here*)

How do I meet my own needs?

**What do I notice about myself when things get hard?**

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It is common for caregivers to experience challenging emotions. Caregivers have shared some of the following: feeling irritable, sad, lonely, exhausted, angry, guilty, or jealous. Some caregivers say they feel embarrassed about the Veteran's care needs/behavior, and some days have trouble with the changing nature of their relationship.

**How do I respond/what tools do I use when things are hard?**

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I walk around the block. I turn on music. I focus on my breathing. I find a way to get a few moments alone.

 **What is one thing I can do to make sure I take breaks every day?**

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I can put it on my calendar. I can set an alarm. I can tell the Veteran what time I am taking breaks. I can take a break after washing the dishes.

**It is normal to need breaks. Breaks can relieve some stress and help with mental health and well-being.**

*Take some time for you every day.*



### People I rely on:

Refer to “Part 1: Who are my people?” Of my people who can I call, text, mail, video call, or meet in person?

I call my sibling to vent/share my feelings. I ask my neighbor for a ride. I text Blake to share a laugh. I visit my grandchild for a hug. I call Martha to schedule a break.

Of my people, I call/text/mail/see \_\_\_\_\_ to/for \_\_\_\_\_

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Of my people, I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help with day-to-day tasks (ex: watching the children, grocery shopping, cleaning, yardwork, laundry.)

### Sentence Starters for Family & Friends:

#### How do I ask for what I need?

Asking for help can be difficult, here are some ways to start that conversation with family, friends, or the VA. When asking for help be concise and specific, make it personal – why are you asking them. You never need to apologize for asking for help, it is a sign of strength.

#### Example:

- “It’s hard for me to ask for help, and I’m feeling overwhelmed. I need you to care for your dad for four hours while I go to the hair salon. I trust you with his care.”

#### Practice Template:

- “It’s hard for me to ask for help, and I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_

I need you to \_\_\_\_\_

(Add affirmation and explain why they are the right fit)

**Follow-up:** As a reminder, people appreciate gratitude. Let the person know how their help brought joy into your life.



## Formal Hired Support

**Step 1:** Circle the formal support you are interested in learning more about from VA.

**Adult Day Health Care** is a program Veterans can go to during the day for social activities, peer support, companionship, and recreation.

**A Home Health Aide** is a trained person who can come to a Veteran's home and help the Veteran take care of themselves and their daily activities.

**Skilled Health Home Care** is for Veterans who need skilled services such as: skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, wound care, or IV antibiotics.

**Home Respite Care** is a service that pays for a person to come to a Veteran's home or for a Veteran to go to an adult day health care program while their family caregiver takes a break or runs errands.

**Nursing Home Respite Care** is a service that pays for a Veteran to go to a nursing home while the family goes out of town for a few days without worrying about leaving the Veteran alone at home.

**Veteran Directed Care** gives Veterans of all ages the opportunity to receive the Home and Community Based Services they need in a consumer-directed way.

This is not an all-inclusive list, please visit:

[https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/pages/Home\\_and\\_Community\\_Based\\_Services.asp](https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/pages/Home_and_Community_Based_Services.asp)  
for more information

**Step 2:** These are the fears, questions, or concerns I would like to discuss with the Veteran's VA healthcare team.

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If you are unsure who the Veteran's Social Worker is, reach out to the Veteran's VA Healthcare Team.

## My Respite Goals

This tool is the first step towards bringing respite into your everyday life.

### What Brings Me Joy: Setting My Joy Goal

In order to establish joy as part of my routine, I may need my own internal supports, people I can rely on and/or formal hired support.

1.) In **Part 1: What Brings Me Joy** 🙌 I listed \_\_\_\_\_ as something that brings me joy.

I listed gardening as something that Brings Me Joy.

2.) What are some steps I can take to find time for **My Joy**? 🙌

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After lunchtime on Tuesdays, I will block off 30 minutes for myself to water the garden. I will make sure to set an alarm on my phone to remind me.

3.) Who are the people I can ask to support **My Goals and My Joys**?

• I can rely on \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 🙌

I can rely on Jaime to visit with the Veteran every Wednesday from 1 – 2 so I can work in the garden or shop for flowers.

4.) How can VA or my community support **My Goals and My Joys**?

• I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about \_\_\_\_\_ 🙌

I can contact Maria, the Veteran's Primary Care Social Worker, to talk about Adult Day Health Care.



## How Do I Care for Myself: Setting My Self-Care Goal

1.) In *Part 2: What is one thing I can do to make sure I take breaks every day?*, I listed \_\_\_\_\_ 

I listed I can set an alarm for 1:00PM to remind me to take a break for 30 minutes.

2.) What are some steps I can take to find time for myself every day?

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When my alarm goes off I will: check on my Veteran, walk to the porch, read a chapter of my novel.

3.) Who are the people I can ask to help me find time for myself?

- I can rely on \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_ 

I can rely on Jamal to call every Monday to encourage me to take time for myself.

4.) How can VA or my community support me in finding time for myself?

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I can contact Maria, the Veteran's Primary Care Social Worker, to talk about in-home respite care.

**Take a moment to breathe—  
you are doing an amazing job! ♥**

**Place "My Respite Goals" on your refrigerator or another key location to remind you of the goals you just set.**