

# TIP OF THE MONTH

## Balancing Caregiving Over the Holidays

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In general, caregiving can be rewarding, challenging, and even stressful. The holiday season can also give rise to more stress, increased frustration, resentment, and at times, even anger. Preparing for the holidays while providing care to your loved ones often puts increased physical and emotional strain on the caregiver.

Caregiving needs vary for each family and there are many things that impact the caregiver relationship, including family dynamics, quality of the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver, caregiving demands, availability of resources, and family caregiver communication patterns. The emotional strain of caregiving can also impact other areas of the caregiver's life. At times, as caregivers we place unnecessary pres-

sure on ourselves to meet or exceed unrealistic expectations, especially for the enjoyment of our youngest and oldest generations. If we don't feel we've succeeded, we may end up feeling guilt, shame, and disappointment in ourselves. Well, it's time to turn this mindset around, especially during the holiday. **It's time to place more energy on balancing caregiving.**

Traditional holidays can be filled with joy. However, this time can also consume a lot of our energy. We often work tirelessly trying to create the perfect holiday only to realize that at the end, we aren't smiling and our efforts to produce the perfect holiday didn't produce perfect results. So, consider carrying out your holiday tradition that is realistic and positive.

Here are five tips that will help you balance caregiving and enjoy a joyful and peaceful holiday season.

**Reframe your mindset:**

Reminiscing about past holidays is fine. However, make every effort to not compare this year to past holidays. Circumstances and the world in which we live are different, and the “perfection” as you may remember it is likely skewed.

**Foster an attitude of gratitude:**

As humans, our brains are wired to focus on what’s not going well and this causes us to lose attention on what is going well. During the holidays, make a gratitude list of the people and things you are grateful for. Consider calling people on your list to express how and why you are grateful.

**Watch silly movies and laugh together:**

Laughter is therapeutic. Laughter is good for the soul. Plenty of research suggests that laughter triggers healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. It also helps you release anger and forgive sooner.

**Communicate effectively and openly:**

Help the entire family understand that your time may be shortened because others rely on you, too and you value everyone. Reinforcing that you have a lot on your plate can help keep their expectations more realistic. Someone may feel inspired to lend a helping hand!

**Make self-care your priority:**

Simplify your holiday and prioritize how you spend your time. Focus on self-care. When your needs are taken care of, the person or people you care for will benefit, too. Remember, when you take a flight, the flight attendant tells you to put your oxygen mask on first before helping others. If you run out of oxygen yourself, you can’t help anyone else.

To help you relax during the holiday, these [brief, guided meditations](#) created by FEAP can help you summon and strengthen your wise, calm, and compassionate self.

Holidays are associated with rituals, family gatherings and happy memories. But the high expectations associated with the holidays can lead to stress and feelings of overwhelm. And for others, holidays can evoke painful memories of the past or a lost loved one.

If you are feeling overwhelmed and your traditional ways of coping are not effective, reach out to FEAP for support.

FEAP is here to assist you. [Explore resources on our website](#) or contact us at 434.243.2643.

FEAP can help you more proactively set boundaries with others, focus on what you can control, and be more consistently intentional about self-care.

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