



The importance of self-care in Family Recovery.

Regardless of what you may have heard, self-care is not a luxury. It can be an essential part of your everyday life—helping you to find the energy and patience to cope with problems. Self-care promotes wellness and emotional intelligence.

Focusing on self-care is important in family recovery because it:

- Improves immunity
- Increases positive thinking
- Reminds us that our needs are important too
- Sends a message to others that we value ourselves
- Increases feelings of calm
- Makes us become more compassionate and understanding toward others

Having a loved one with a substance use disorder (SUD) can feel overwhelming. When we're stressed out, we often neglect our own well-being, making us even less equipped to cope with our emotions.

Helpful strategies.

The book, "Beyond Addiction," mentions the following strategies for self-care and holistic wellness for families of those who struggle with substance use:

- Developing and building resilience
- Practicing "distress tolerance" (see below)
- Keeping perspective
- Recognizing and managing triggers

Taking care of yourself demonstrates healthy behavior and puts you in a better position to interact with a loved one. There's a popular saying: "An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly,"

When you're living with – or navigating a relationship with – a loved one who is struggling with substance use, life may seem outside of your control. Creating and maintaining a self-care routine allows you to have some control over an aspect of your life that brings you joy and peace. A regular routine provides structure and some predictability in an otherwise unpredictable world.

Time well spent.

With our busy schedules, we tend to put off things like taking care of ourselves. However, starting a new self-care routine is extremely important in order for you to have the strength and tenacity to find peace even amid challenging times.

If, at first, you have a hard time adopting self-care practices, it's completely normal. Start with simple tasks, such as eating right, getting adequate rest, exercising, and avoiding mind- and mood-altering substances. Remember to be kind and patient with yourself. After all, meaningful change takes time!

A skill called “distress tolerance.”

“Beyond Addiction” introduces readers to “distress tolerance” as a vital aspect of self-care. Distress tolerance is a skill that requires practice. It allows family members to accept their situation as it is. This helpful skill teaches us that other people's actions are outside of our control. Techniques for distress tolerance include:

- Distracting yourself
- Relaxing
- Self-soothing
- Taking a break
- Creating positive experiences
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To distract yourself, you can try activities like calling a friend, reading, taking a walk, gardening, watching funny videos, taking a shower, or listening to music. You can also do something generous for someone else (for example, writing a letter or text to someone to let them know that they mean a lot to you – or going through clothing to donate what you no longer need).

To soothe yourself, enjoy something that appeals to any of the five senses (a warm drink, nature sounds, a cozy blanket, essential oils, a massage, or listen to your favorite song).

Stay calm.

Learn to recognize when you need to take a break and step away from a situation. When emotions are running high, very little can be accomplished. Try taking a walk and releasing some of those strong feelings. You can return to the situation or conversation once things have calmed down.

You can do many things to help create positive experiences, including forcing yourself to half-smile, engaging in meditation and prayer, and moving your body, to name a few.

Therapy and support.

Therapy and support groups can be helpful for people navigating a relationship with someone suffering from a SUD. A therapist can provide you with tools for building self-esteem and self-awareness, managing stress, setting boundaries, and empowering you to make tough choices so you can take care of yourself.

There are many support groups for people who love someone with SUD. Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Families Anon, and Recovering Together provide opportunities to

share your experiences in a safe space. You'll receive feedback and encouragement from others who can relate.

I'm here to help.

As a Family Recovery Coach, I can help you create sustainable self-care regimens and introduce you to various holistic wellness methods. When we find one you like, I can help you incorporate it into your wellness plan.

An event that celebrates wellness.

Speaking of self-care, I'd like to mention that the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force is holding its 2nd Annual **"Trails to Wellness"** event—in Torrington at the Franklin Square on Thursday, July 25, 2024, from 4:00 p.m. till 7:00 p.m. It's a celebration of the many pathways to recovery from an SUD as well as an exploration of various holistic wellness activities. Attendees can learn all about yoga, aromatherapy, art therapy, gardening, intentional journaling, and much more!

How to reach me.

For guidance on how to develop a customized self-care plan – or to learn more about the July 25 "Trails to Wellness" event – please reach out to me at 959.229.4814 or Alicia.Peterson@mccallbhn.org.



McCall's Family Recovery Coach Program is grant funded and provided at no-cost to all participants.

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Resources

**McCall Behavioral Health
Network**
860.496.2100

Clifford Beers Clinic
New Haven
Christine Montgomery

mccallbhn.org

McCall's Recovering Together Group

Meets every Wednesday,
5:30PM via Zoom.
For more info, email:
leann.mitchell@mccallbhn.org

NAMI CT, Waterbury

Paul Brainerd
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Sound Community Services

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Community Renewal Team

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TriCircle, Hope and Support Groups

Hope After Loss Groups
Ana Gopoian
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