

10 Tips to help Caregivers Stay in the Moment



Being in the present moment is a helpful skill to manage stress; anxiety and difficult emotions while caregiving. When we practice being in the moment, our body can get a break from the stress response of “fight or flight”.

With practice, these tips can help reduce stress and help you to be kinder to yourself and to others. These tips can help you cope with the range of feelings and experiences of caregiving. You can learn to see yourself and the situation differently and this can help you to respond to everyday challenges more creatively and effectively.

- 1 Breathe.** Focus on your belly or chest and notice the physical feelings of breathing in and breathing out. Do this for 10 full breaths.
- 2 Take more moments to pause.** Before answering your phone, take 3 breaths. You can try this while stopped at a red light in traffic, and before entering the front door of your home.
- 3 Notice your food.** Take 10 seconds before you eat to pay attention to the colours, textures, smells of the food on your plate.
- 4 Eat without distractions.** Eat one meal a day or week in silence without any distractions: no phone, TV, radio, reading, or computer. If this is too hard, then start by eating the first 5 minutes of your meal in silence with no distractions. It is OK to start with the first 3 bites of your meal in silence.

- 5 **Walk with all of your senses on.** During a walk, what colours, sounds, smells, do you notice? How does the wind or temperature feel on your skin? What kind of surface are you walking on; something hard or soft? How does it feel?
- 6 **Everyday activity with full awareness.** Do a household task such as washing the dishes, folding laundry, or gardening with your full attention and using all of your senses.
- 7 **Change a routine.** Changing a routine helps to break the automatic thinking and doing habits we all have. Sometimes the automatic thought or action is not the most helpful or skillful option. Some ideas to practice getting a fresh perspective include:
 - Take a new route when you go for a walk, or drive somewhere.
 - Get off a stop earlier on the TTC and walk the rest of the way.
 - Brush your teeth with the opposite hand.
 - Notice your reaction to the change. How do you feel?
- 8 **Do just 1 thing at a time** and pay full attention to what you are doing, right now. Using all 5 senses of sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste can help focus your attention.
- 9 **Get off the runaway train of thoughts.** When you notice getting lost in your thoughts, or being on auto-pilot, notice what took your attention away. Then bring your focus back to your 5 senses and the task you are doing.
- 10 **Practice.** A lot of repetition may be needed to bring focus and attention to the present moment. This repetition is a normal and necessary part of the process. Everybody needs to practice to stay in the moment.



Sinai Health System

THE CYRIL & DOROTHY, JOEL & JILL
REITMAN CENTRE FOR ALZHEIMER'S
SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Cyril & Dorothy, Joel & Jill Reitman Centre for Alzheimer's Support and Training

60 Murray Street, Suite L1-012. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5T 3L9

T (416) 586-4800 ext. 5882 | F (416) 586-3231

reitmaninquiries.msh@sinaihealthsystem.ca | www.mountsinai.on.ca/reitman