



Take a moment to care for yourself

If you're providing unpaid care for another adult, you're not alone. Many people care for their ageing parents, partners or other loved ones, and many people do it while also caring for children.

Even on the busiest days, it's important to check in on your own wellbeing. Pause for a moment and reflect with the questions on the blue side of these cards.

Ready to flip the conversation?

Click the arrows to help engage in conversation with someone you are caring for

What's your favourite memory with the person you're caring for?

It can be easy to think of ourselves as just caregivers, but we're also friends, children, parents and so much more. If you're focussed on duty right now, focus on the lighter parts of your relationship too. Those fond memories may help get you through the tough moments.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

When was the last time you had your favourite meal?

If takeaway between appointments or snacks in the car is becoming your go-to for meals, it may be time to think about ways to fit healthy and varied foods into your days. Whilst cooking a multi-course meal probably isn't realistic, packing single-serving fruit salads or cut-up veggies for the week may be.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

When was your last day off?

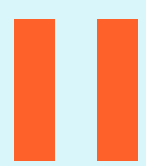
Everyone needs days off: from work and from caregiving. If you haven't had a break from caring for others lately, think about your options. Could friends or family step in whilst you take time away? Is there a resource in your community that could help? If you're not sure what's available, check if your benefits include a number to call for support.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What is your first thought when you wake up?

Bursting out of bed each day with positive thoughts is amazing. But it's not reality for everyone, we know. If you tend to wake up feeling negative, consider incorporating mindfulness practices into your morning routine. For example, try 5 minutes of stretching or learn grounding exercises to calm your mind.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for



Pause Card

Take 5 minutes

Open a window and get some fresh air. Go outside to grab the mail. Or simply change rooms. It's time to get a fresh perspective and reset.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What are some of your own needs that can be prioritised today?

Globally, women spend more than 50 minutes a day, and men spend about half that, providing unpaid care work.* When you're balancing work and other responsibilities too, that doesn't leave a lot of time for your own needs.

Check in with yourself, and see if there's anything important you've been skipping, like getting preventive care or paying attention to your mental health.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What are you grateful for today?

Practising gratitude can help reduce worrying, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and boost overall mental health.* Write down or say out loud 3 things, big or small, that you are grateful for each morning or before bed each night. After a week, see if it's made you feel any different.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

* Diniz G, Korkes L, Tristão LS, et al. The effects of gratitude interventions: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Einstein* (São Paulo). 2023 Aug 11;21.

How does it feel when others ask to support you?

When they feel alone, caregivers are more likely to report high emotional stress.*

If you're feeling alone, look to those around you and ask for support. It may feel hard, but asking for what you need – whether it's someone to listen or someone to pitch in with meal prep – can help reduce your burden and make you feel like you're not in this alone.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What's your favourite way to escape?

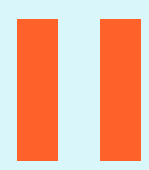
Whilst relaxing on a tropical beach may not be possible right now, there are ways to escape even when it feels like you don't have a spare moment. For example, if you love books but you're too busy to read, you might try audiobooks while you're commuting.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What is a song that brings you joy the second you hear it?

Try playing this song with the person you are caring for and sharing what you love about it – including any memories associated with it. Music may be a way to add some joy. It may also give you some moments free from conversation, which we all need now and then.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for



Pause Card

Try box breathing

Before, during or after a stressful situation, try this simple breathing technique. Do each of the following steps for a count of 4. When you're done, repeat.*

1

**Breathe in
through
your nose**

2

Hold

3

**Breathe out
through
your mouth**

4

Hold

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

* Norelli SK, Long A, Krepps JM. *Relaxation techniques*. Florida: StatPearls Publishing; 2024.

When was the last time you felt really happy?

Feeling happy all the time isn't realistic. We all have bad days. But if you or someone in your life has been feeling sad for a while, it could be a sign of depression. Other signs include feeling irritable, having trouble sleeping and feeling guilty or worthless.* If you're experiencing these symptoms, please talk with your doctor or make an appointment with a therapist.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

How do you handle feeling angry?

We all feel angry sometimes, and responding with aggression is a natural instinct. Changing how we think and speak can help. That means avoiding thoughts that are overly exaggerated, such as saying “this always happens” or “things never work out.” Instead, try to think more rationally.*

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What's one thing you always forget when you leave the house?

Creating a go-bag or a simple checklist of items you need can help relieve the stress of waiting rooms or time away from home. Make sure you have snacks and water to keep yourself fueled, a book or simple activity to keep your mind at ease, and even extra clothes in case the temperature is uncomfortable.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

When was the last time you said no?

Setting boundaries is an important part of any healthy relationship.* That might include tasks you're not comfortable taking on as a caregiver. Make sure you know how to communicate your needs to others.* If you're not comfortable doing this, reach out to a therapist. They can give you tips and help you practise having tough conversations.

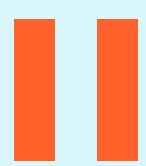
Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

Who do you call or text when you need to talk?

Sometimes we all need to share our feelings or to feel heard, whether we're feeling overwhelmed with caregiving or we're frustrated by current events. In those moments, let others know what you need. Do you want them to offer suggestions, or do you just need someone to listen?

If you find you're venting to a friend frequently, consider whether it's time to seek professional support.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for



Pause Card

Visualise a perfect afternoon

Close your eyes. What does your perfect afternoon sound, smell, taste and feel like? Spend 5 minutes here.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

When was the last time you captured a moment?

When we're busy caregiving, we can sometimes forget to pause and soak in memories with our loved ones. Think about what you'd miss most about this time in your life. Jot down quotes in a notebook, record voice memos of your loved one sharing stories or take pictures of family or friends together – whatever feels comfortable to you both.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What are you most worried about right now?

Everyone worries sometimes, but constant worries could be a sign of anxiety.* If you're constantly thinking about worst-case scenarios or your mind keeps spiralling about the same worry, reach out for help. Healthy eating, exercise, sleep and mindfulness can help as well.*

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

Who else in your life could be a part of this journey with you?

If you feel like you're caregiving alone, finding support can relieve some of the pressure. Some family members may just need a little nudge to understand that their help is needed. Look to community support groups for help. And remember that children often appreciate being involved in age-appropriate ways too. Participating may help them feel positive instead of feeling like they've lost your attention.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

How do you seek purpose in your life outside of caring for others?

Many caregivers feel positive emotions at the same time as feelings of isolation, stress or strain. In fact, some caregivers say their role gives them a sense of purpose or meaning in life.* If caregiving doesn't feel rewarding for you, think about what does.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

* Yeonjung L, Lun L. Evaluating the positive experience of caregiving: A systematic review of the positive aspects of caregiving scale. *Gerontologist*. 2022;62:e493-e507

How often do you get a good night's rest?

To be healthy and rested, it's important to get enough sleep. Adults typically need 7–9 hours.* Caregiving can be a 24/7 job, which can impact your sleep. If there are needs at night, try to plan ahead with a routine or seek support to share overnight duties. Avoid caffeine late in the day and find relaxing activities to do before going to sleep.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

* National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Brain basics: Understanding sleep. ninds.nih.gov. June 18, 2024.



Pause Card

Write down how you're feeling

What you write doesn't have to be perfect or even make sense to anyone else. Just get your thoughts down on paper. It can be a good way to help release any pent-up emotions.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

What is one thing you miss doing?

It's OK to grieve who you were or things you've missed out on since caregiving began taking up more of your time. It's normal to be sad or frustrated that things have changed, and that doesn't diminish your love or care for the person you're supporting. Give yourself the space to acknowledge this and think about ways to incorporate more things you love into your days.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

Are you keeping up with your own healthcare?

For some people, being a caregiver can have a negative impact on health.* Remember to take care of yourself, mentally and physically, by getting preventive care and screenings. Your own wellbeing is important. And you can't effectively care for others if you're not caring for yourself.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

* Lacey RE, Xue B, Di Gessa G., et al. Mental and physical health changes around transitions into unpaid caregiving in the UK: A longitudinal, propensity score analysis. *The Lancet*. 2024; 9:1, E16-E25.

Is caregiving affecting your job?

Whether you need time off for appointments or you're stressed and tired all the time, taking care of others may affect your ability to be your best at work.

Share what you're going through with your manager and co-workers. They may offer some flexibility and support. They may even be dealing with the same challenges.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

Do you feel supported?

Whilst some caregivers have support, others feel alone. Take a moment to reflect on and feel gratitude for the people who are helping you. Or, if you aren't so fortunate, take a moment to acknowledge your feelings. It may help to talk about them too.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for

Have you celebrated yourself recently?

Learned something new? Tackled a big project at work? Demonstrated some amazing parenting or friendship skills? Take a moment to feel proud and celebrate yourself. Even if no one else notices, you're worthy of some kind thoughts – and it's a great time to treat yourself to something special too.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for



Emotional Wellbeing Solutions



When you're dealing with the pressures of caregiving, it can be easy to set your own needs aside. With 24/7 support from Emotional Wellbeing Solutions, you don't have to.

A modern, flexible employee assistance programme (EAP), Emotional Wellbeing Solutions offers support for what you're going through – with this role and so much more.

Visit **livewell.optum.com** to learn what's available to you.

Click to flip the conversation
with those you're caring for



Spark a conversation

When you're caring for another adult, it can be easy to stay focused on basic tasks. But with a quarter of the world experiencing loneliness, taking time for real conversations is important too.*

As you're caring for your loved one, use the conversation starters on the orange side of these cards. Invite other friends or family members who may be around into the conversation too. You might be surprised at what you learn about each other.

Ready to flip the conversation?

Click the arrows to reflect and take a moment to focus on yourself

What's your favourite memory with me?

When we're in a relationship that involves caregiving, we can often forget to show gratitude for all the positive moments we've shared. Take time to reflect and share. Often we find that little moments turn into big memories. If you're caring for an older adult such as a parent, it can be helpful to remember a time when roles were different.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What is your favourite thing to eat?

We may pick a favourite food simply because we enjoy the taste or texture. But often, a favourite food can be tied to relationships. We may remember cooking something special for our kids, anticipating a snack at our grandparents' house or having a certain meal for celebrations. Think about how nourishing others and being nourished make you feel.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

If there were no rules or barriers, what would you want to do today?

Whether you have big goals (climb a mountain!) or smaller ones (grab an ice cream cone), it can be fun to think about your favourite activities. If the ones you named aren't achievable today, think about what is. There's always a way to add some spontaneity and joy to our days.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What are your favourite and least favourite parts of your daily routine?

There are things we do because they are essential, like practising good hygiene and taking medications, and things we do because they bring us joy, like drinking an afternoon cup of tea. If there are parts of your routine that bring challenges, talk about them.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself



Pause Card

Take 5 minutes

Open a window and get some fresh air. Get up and stretch. Or pause what you're doing and listen to a favourite song. It's time to get a fresh perspective and reset.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What is one thing you want me to know about you that I might not know?

With caregiving, relationships can sometimes become transactional as day-to-day needs begin to stack up. And that means we can focus on what we need to do, not on who we are as people.

Even if you've been in this relationship for years, there's always something new to learn about each other. So take a moment to ask – and respond to – this question.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Can you tell me a highlight from your day today?

Oftentimes we go through our routine and don't stop to appreciate the little moments. Take a minute to appreciate the beauty around you. That might be watching a particularly colourful sunset, interacting with someone who was kind or reading a great book. Focussing on positive moments can help change a person's overall mood and outlook.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Tell me a story about a best friend – past or present

Even if we've spent years together, it's possible we haven't talked about some of the people who've been most important to us – or even new friends we've met recently.

This conversation can be a great time to figure out who needs to stay in the know or to just share in the joy of a story.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Conversation starter

Did you have a favourite TV show, actor, book or movie growing up?

Watching a favourite show or reading a favourite book together can be a fun way to share what we love and get someone else's perspective on it.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Conversation starter

What's your favourite music to listen to? Has that always been your favourite?

Whilst some of us keep up with the latest music, others have favourite songs or styles that last a lifetime. Share which tunes make you happy – and any that bring back memories of your past.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself



Pause Card

Take 3 deep breaths

When a stressful situation happens, simply slowing down our breathing may help. Take 3 deep breaths and see how you feel.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

When did you last laugh really hard?

Laughter does more than just bring people together. It can also have a positive effect on our overall wellbeing. Laughter can relax our muscles, boost our immunity, increase our self-esteem and release the feel-good chemicals in our body.*

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What do you do when you are upset?

When we're angry, we can experience strong emotional and physical responses, such as our blood pressure and heart rate going up. If you tend to lash out at others when you experience those feelings, think about better approaches. Express your feelings calmly, and make your needs clear in a respectful way that doesn't hurt others.*

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

* Titova OE, Baron JA, Michaëlsson K, et al. Anger frequency and risk of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, *European Heart Journal Open*, Volume 2, Issue 4, July 2022.

What is one thing you love about your current space? One thing you don't like?

Our environments can affect our wellbeing. Even if we don't have control or ownership of our space, we can make small changes that have a big impact. Consider adjustments like rearranging furniture to lessen mobility challenges, shifting art or pictures closer for easy viewing, or getting a lamp to make certain activities easier.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Are you able to tell me when you are uncomfortable?

When someone is caring for us, we may hesitate to say if something's not working or doesn't feel right because we worry about seeming ungrateful. Setting boundaries is important for all relationships, though.* For example, if you'd prefer an outside resource for bathing or you want to speak with your doctor privately, be honest about it. Together, you can figure out how to make your relationship feel right for both of you.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Conversation starter

What's the hardest thing you have ever done?

We've all accomplished tough things – some that we challenge ourselves to do and others that we've had to take on due to tough circumstances.

Celebrate all that you've overcome and all that you're still capable of doing.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself



Pause Card

Visualise a perfect afternoon

Close your eyes. What does your perfect afternoon sound, smell, taste and feel like? Spend 5 minutes here.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Tell me about your favourite childhood pet

Dogs and cats can have a big impact on our lives, helping reduce stress, depression, anxiety and loneliness.* If you aren't able to care for a pet right now, think about the joy one brought you when you were younger.

Never had a pet? Imagine which animal you'd most like to see in real life.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

* Hussein SM, Solima WS, Khalifa AA. Benefits of pets' ownership, a review based on health perspectives. *Journal of Internal Medicine and Emergency Research*. 2021;2 :1-9.

What forms of self-care make you feel the best?

Getting your hair washed, having your nails done, getting a foot massage or enjoying a nice lunch out can be a great way to boost your immediate mood. And when you take time for self-care, it may impact your overall mental and physical wellbeing too.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What has helped you when you feel bored or stuck?

If you've gone through changes to your mobility or you rely on someone else for it, you may feel like you don't have the freedom you desire. Look for ways to connect with the community that work for your circumstances, like video-calling your loved ones, attending religious services remotely, or watching lectures and concerts online. If you aren't able to use a computer by yourself, ask someone to help.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What is something that gives you a sense of purpose?

Taking care of pets, watering your plants, visiting with grandchildren or checking in on friends who live alone are examples of ways we can feel a sense of purpose, even though we rely on others to help care for us. Reflect on what brings you joy and the ways you're needed by others each day.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Do you have a comfort object?

We all have favourite things, whether it's a handmade blanket or an old photo album. When we're going through times of stress or moving to a new location, these items can help us find comfort. Make sure your caregiver understands what's important to you in those moments.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself



Pause Card

**Make a silly face
or tell me your
best joke**

Laughter can have a positive effect on our mental and physical health.* So give it a try.

**Click to flip the conversation
on yourself**

* Robinson L, Smith M, Segal J. Laughter is the best medicine. helpguide.org. February 5, 2024.

What is something you've always wanted to learn? Why?

Lifelong learning can help us thrive, giving us new skills and knowledge no matter our age.* Remember that it's never too late to learn something new.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What makes you feel in control?

Even if you rely on someone else for help, there are ways to still feel in control of your own life. Having frank conversations around your boundaries and comfort levels may help strengthen your relationship and make it work better for both of you. If you've lost some independence, it's normal to grieve. Be patient and find what works.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What's something you've learned about that you enjoy?

Maybe you had a favourite subject in school, or maybe you had an interest in a certain type of animal, a period in history or something else. Share what made you enjoy learning about it – and a few of your favourite things you remember.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What can I do to support you better?

Being a caregiver can be tough. So is going through change or feeling like you're losing your independence. Be open with each other and share what you honestly need to feel supported. It might be awkward at first, but it can help you build a strong relationship – something that will be important to lean on in challenging times.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

Conversation starter

What is one thing you've accomplished or hope to accomplish?

Maybe you created a bucket list long ago, or maybe answering this question is going to take a little thought. Either way, remember that you can accomplish what you set your mind to – big and small things. If you need support to achieve those goals, ask for it.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself

What's challenging you right now? What can I do to help?

When someone is already offering support with daily tasks, doctor appointments and more, it can be hard to ask for something more or different. But unless we're honest with our caregivers, they might not understand our needs.

Click to flip the conversation
on yourself