



# The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

November 2024

## Family Caregivers Month

National Family Caregiver Month is observed every November in the United States. During this month, we honor and recognize the vital role of family caregivers who provide around-the-clock support for their loved ones in need. According to the National Council on Aging, family members are often the primary source of support for older adults and people with disabilities. More than 53 million family caregivers provide unpaid care.

Caring for a loved one can strain even the most resilient people. If you're a caregiver, take steps to preserve your own health and wellbeing. The demands of caregiving may also cause emotional and physical stress. It's common to feel angry, frustrated, worn out, or sad. And it's common to feel alone.

As a caregiver, you may be so focused on your loved one that you don't see how caregiving affects your own health and wellbeing. Caregiver stress can put caregivers at risk of changes in their own health. Signs may include worry, tiredness, weight loss or gain, irritability, sadness, headaches, or missing your own medical appointments.

### Mayo Clinic offers these tips to manage caregiver stress:

- **Ask for and accept help.** Make a list of ways in which others can help you.
- **Focus on what you can do.** Believe that you're doing the best you can.
- **Set goals you can reach.** Break large tasks into smaller steps that you can do one at a time.
- **Get connected.** Learn about caregiving resources in your area.
- **Join a support group.** They can cheer you on and help you solve problems.
- **Seek social support.** Stay connected to family and friends who support you.
- **Take care of your health.** Find ways to sleep better. Move your body in ways that you enjoy most days. Eat a healthy diet. Drink plenty of water.
- **See your health care professional.** Talk about worries or symptoms you have.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/caregiver-stress/art-20044784>



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## Prioritizing Family Time and 'Me Time' During the Holiday Rush

The holiday season is often filled with commitments, events, and long to-do lists, making it easy to lose sight of personal wellbeing and family connections. Amid the busyness, it's essential to carve out time for yourself and your loved ones to avoid burnout and stay grounded. Here are some strategies to help you balance it all:

**Set Boundaries:** Be selective with your social calendar. It's okay to say "no" to events or activities that don't align with your priorities. Decide which events are most important and gracefully decline others. Protecting your time allows you to focus on what matters most—quality time with family and self-care.

**Create Family Traditions:** Engaging in activities that bring joy and connection, such as baking cookies, decorating the house, or hosting a game night, strengthens family bonds. Traditions not only bring warmth and fun to the holidays but also create lasting memories.

**Schedule 'Me Time':** Block out time for yourself in the same way you would for any important event. Whether it's reading, exercising, or enjoying a quiet cup of coffee, personal time allows you to recharge, making you more present and engaged when spending time with others.

**Unplug Regularly:** Technology can be a huge distraction, even during family gatherings. Designate tech-free zones or times, especially during meals or family activities, to ensure deeper connections and more meaningful interactions.

**Practice Mindful Presence:** With so much going on, it's easy to feel distracted. Try to be fully present during family moments. Put away devices, reduce multitasking, and immerse yourself in conversations and activities with your loved ones.

**Delegate Tasks:** Don't try to take on everything yourself. Involve family members in holiday planning, from meal prep to decorating, to lessen your load and turn chores into opportunities for bonding.

By being intentional with your time and energy, you can create a holiday season that is joyful and rejuvenating. Taking time for yourself and your family will not only help you recharge but also strengthen the relationships that matter most. Prioritizing what truly brings joy during the holidays can make the season more meaningful for everyone involved.

Source: <https://discoverhappyhabits.com/holiday-self-care/>



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## The Gift of Gratitude: Finding Meaning Amid the Holiday Hustle

The holiday season often brings stress and busyness, but it's also the perfect time to pause and reflect on the things we're grateful for. Practicing gratitude has been shown to improve mental health, strengthen relationships, and boost overall well-being. During the holidays, it can be especially valuable to focus on gratitude, as it helps us stay centered amidst the hustle and bustle. One simple way to practice gratitude is by keeping a daily journal. Writing down three things you're thankful for each day, whether big or small, can shift your mindset towards positivity. Expressing gratitude verbally, whether through a heartfelt thank-you to a friend, family member, or colleague or even writing a note of appreciation, strengthens connections and spreads joy.

Gratitude can also be practiced through giving back. Volunteering or donating to causes close to your heart allows you to appreciate your own blessings while contributing to others' well-being. Even small acts of kindness, like paying it forward or helping a neighbor, can instill a sense of purpose and community spirit. Beyond personal benefits, research shows that gratitude boosts resilience, especially during stressful or hectic times like the holidays. It helps us stay grounded and brings focus back to what matters most—relationships, health, and community. Gratitude can also shift the focus away from materialism and the pressures of gift-giving, which often overwhelm the holiday season.

Incorporating gratitude into your holiday routine enhances your happiness and promotes a spirit of generosity and kindness throughout your community. Studies have shown that practicing gratitude regularly can increase empathy and reduce aggression, creating a ripple effect of positivity. So, take a moment this season to reflect on what truly matters, share your appreciation with those around you, and inspire others to do the same. When gratitude becomes a daily habit, it can transform how you experience the holiday season, making it more meaningful and joyful for everyone involved.

Source: <https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/>

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We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach.  
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## Crunch Bar–Inspired Energy Balls

### Ingredients

- 11 ounces pitted dates (about 2 cups)
- 2½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup unsalted unsweetened cashew butter
- ⅓ cup reduced-fat plain (Greek-style) yogurt
- 1 (3.9-ounce) package chocolate instant pudding mix
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups puffed brown rice cereal
- 4 tablespoons dark chocolate chips

### Directions

1. Place 2 cups dates in a medium heatproof bowl; cover with boiling water. Let stand until softened, about 10 minutes. Drain well.
2. Pulse the drained dates in a food processor until coarsely chopped. Add 2½ cups oats, ½ cup cashew butter, ⅓ cup yogurt, 1 (3.9-ounce) package pudding mix, 4 teaspoons vanilla and ½ teaspoon salt; process until a thick paste forms and the oats are chopped into small pieces. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl; gently fold in 2 cups puffed rice by hand until evenly combined.
3. Roll about 1 tablespoon date mixture into a ball; place on parchment-paper-lined baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining date mixture.
4. Microwave 4 tablespoons chocolate chips in a small bowl on High in 30-second intervals, stirring between each interval, until melted. Spoon the chocolate into a small zip-top plastic bag; cut a ¼-inch hole in the corner. Drizzle the balls with the melted chocolate; garnish with puffed rice, if desired. Refrigerate, uncovered, until the chocolate is set, about 5 minutes.

### Nutrition

**Per Serving: 3 Balls**

**Calories: 161 | Protein: 4g | Carbohydrates: 26g | Dietary Fiber: 3g | Saturated Fat: 2g  
| Total Sugars: 12g | Sodium: 109mg | Cholesterol: 1g**

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/crunch-bar-inspired-energy-balls-8683274>