



## Tips for Self-Care

Margie Frazier, PhD, LISW-S, Rare Disease Advocate & Consultant

Stress is notorious for making dystonia symptoms worse. The following gentle reminders may help ease stress before it becomes overwhelming.

**Acknowledge loss and change.** This could be loss of being able to do all you once did. Changes in daily living impact our lives, even if they are happy changes. Acknowledging the change helps to ease tension.

**Assess and prioritize.** Look at your calendar and mark what activities and responsibilities are important to you. This will help you make positive choices about how you spend your time and energy.

**Good sleep** is the number one self-care activity that can boost your coping and physical wellness in times of stress. Have a sleep routine and watch your caffeine intake. If you need help sleeping better, talk to your doctor or mental health therapist.

**Stay connected.** Connecting with friends, family, and community builds a sense of security and pride.

**Alter routines and traditions.** Don't be afraid to talk with friends and family members about the choices you are making. Help them to understand your limitations. Embrace the new ways of doing things.

**Look for hope and joy, and savor them.** A stranger's smile, hearing your favorite song on the radio, spending time family and friends. Recognize the small moments that give you joy and remember them with gratitude.

**Take deep breaths.** Even just two slow, deep breaths can help you relax and stay focused. Use this method when you start to feel tense or stressed.

**Don't be afraid to reach out.** If you are struggling with depression or have feelings of despair talk to your doctor, talk to those safe people in your life, or seek help from a mental health professional. Resources are available if you don't know where to turn. Additional information is available at: [dystonia-foundation.org/living-dystonia/mental-health/](https://www.dystonia-foundation.org/living-dystonia/mental-health/)

*Adapted from the webinar entitled "Self-Care for the Holidays" with Margie Frazier, PhD, LISW-S, presented by Dystonia Medical Research Foundation and available for viewing on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/FacesofDystonia>*