

Coach's Corner

Taking care of your top dog

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By Sharon Pahlka, kidney patient and Life Coach

Taking care of your top dog means taking care of YOU! Staying healthy allows you to feel better and be around to take care of the ones you care about. The more worried, frazzled, and stressed you are, the less you have to contribute to others and your own tasks. You are your own top dog. No one is going to do this for you.

Not long ago I watched a gripping video about caregivers caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease. I was shocked at the terrific toll it took on the caregiver's health. It's so relentless. With just a little reprieve to take care of themselves, caregivers become better caregivers and have the energy and health to hang in there. The same is true for patients. Self-care is an investment that always pays big dividends in the long run.

Self-care means different things to different people. For me, it means saying "no" to many of the good things in my life. I just can't do them all and stay healthy. I have to focus on a few good things and let the rest go. For others, it can be finding the time to do something they love—taking a class, a trip to the hairdresser, or quality time with the kids or grandkids.

Each week, try to include a few things that energize, motivate, inspire, and make you feel better. Schedule self-care the same way you schedule your doctor's appointments.

Coaching Question:

What will it take to get you to ask for help with your self-care?

Coaching Tip:

Keep a list of things that make you feel energized, enthusiastic, and truly alive.

Homework:

Schedule at least three self-care times and activities for the next month.

Quotes:

"Love yourself first and everything else falls into line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world." Lucille Ball

Resources:

The Joy Diet: 10 Daily Practices for a Happier Life, Martha Beck

Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions, Kate Loring, R.N., [et al.]

Sharon Pahlka, pictured here with her "top dog," is a life coach specializing in helping those with chronic health challenges live well and meaningfully. She spent 19 years on dialysis, and for the last 11 years has had a kidney transplant. To learn more and read other Coach's Corner articles, visit her Web site: <http://www.lifeisagift.com>.