



# Wellbeing

## Insights

*Living a Better, More Vibrant Life*



## Self-Care for the Caregiver

Caregiving is one of the most challenging roles many of us will face in our lifetime. Oftentimes becoming a caregiver happens suddenly, leaving us feeling unprepared and overwhelmed by the task. While stepping up to offer care, compassion and advocacy for our loved ones is a magnificent gift that we are eager to give, it can also be very stressful. In observance of National Caregiver Support Month, we've got some tips for when you are battling stress, burnout, guilt and other challenges in your caregiving role so that you can be at your best.

**Be accepting of situations and emotions.** It can be easy to tailspin into overwhelming toxic thoughts while trying to rationalize a loved one's illness or the burden of

caregiving, asking "Why them?" or "Why me?" However, dwelling on the things you can't change can quickly drain you of energy and hope. Try instead to accept the situation and think about the ways it has made you a stronger person, brought you closer to your loved one or other family members, or allowed you to give back and show your love. Since you cannot wish away your loved one's illness or force your family members to help out more, you'll find it beneficial to focus in on the things you can control.

A very common emotion faced by caregivers is guilt. Guilt may be experienced for a variety of reasons, for example, believing you could have done more in the past or could be doing more

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now. Whatever the circumstance, know that this is a perfectly normal reaction. Again, focus on what you can control in this moment and reassure yourself that you are doing the very best you can.

**Take care of yourself.** Resting, doing things you enjoy and taking care of your own health may seem like impossible luxuries to a busy caregiver. However, you owe it to yourself and the one you are caring for; you cannot give your best care when you're feeling emotionally or physically depleted.

Making time for breaks will help you decompress from the stress. Visit with a friend, get out of the house, take a long bath, get a massage, exercise, journal, take a nap, etc. Whatever it may be, don't treat these breaks as a luxury but rather a priority. Schedule in blocks of time each day dedicated to your self-care. In addition to daily you time, it's important to take care of your health. Keep up beneficial rituals – get plenty of sleep, drink water, keep up on your own doctor's visits, brush your teeth, take your medications, etc.

**Get the help and support you need.** When the care of your loved one is on the line, you may find it hard to trust anyone else with responsibilities or struggle with feeling like an inconvenience or burden to others. Enter science, which has

definitively proven that reaching out, connecting and leaning on others in tough times helps reduce stress tremendously and is mutually beneficial for the person giving and the one receiving the help. Start by deciding where you are willing to relinquish some control. Have a small list of tasks ready so that if someone offers help, you feel comfortable saying yes. Don't rely on family or friends, no matter how well-meaning they may be, to automatically know what you need. If you see a way they could pitch in, speak up and ask for what you need. You might also consider a respite agency or reaching out to your employer's EAP who can help you locate the resources you need to effectively care for your loved one and offer emotional support.

Joining a support group is another great way to share your troubles and get valuable advice. Here are some places you can find a local group:

- The social work department of the hospital
- Adult day care centers (even if you don't use their services)
- Non-profits that deal with your care recipient's condition (e.g., Alzheimer's, ALS, MS)
- Area agencies on aging
- Your faith community



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Too often **we underestimate** the power of touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, **all of which** have the potential to **turn a life around.**

- LEO BUSCAGLIA

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## On the Menu

# MCT Oil

MCT oil is a supplement made from a type of fat called medium-chain triglycerides (MCT). MCT molecules are smaller than those in most of the fats you eat, which are called long-chain triglycerides. It is found that this shortened chain makes MCT easier to digest and enhances absorption into your bloodstream. For these reasons, MCT oil can turn into energy you can quickly use. It's usually made from coconut or palm kernel oil. However, most manufacturers and brands taut that 100% coconut MCT oil is the best option due to environmental concerns of palm oil.

The recent increase in MCT supplementation is due to the fact that most Western diets do not incorporate high-quality MCT fats into their diets. MCT oil is often added to smoothies, coffee and salad dressings. Because most MCT oil has a low burning point, it's not advised for cooking. If you are looking to incorporate real-food MCT options in your diet, you can consider cheese, butter, ghee, milk and yogurt. However, these food options have about half or less of the MCT percentage of coconut oil and/or MCT oil supplements. If you do choose food options, the highest quality products will be organic and grass-fed with no hormones added.

While more research is needed, MCT oil has notable potential health benefits, including:

- **Energy Support** – Since MCT oil is easily absorbed and transported throughout the body, it can be an instant source of energy or converted into ketones to fuel your brain.
- **Brain Function** – It may improve brain function, which could have benefits for people with epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease and autism.
- **Heart Health** – It may reduce heart disease risk factors such as weight, cholesterol and inflammation.

As with all supplements, it's important to connect with your healthcare provider or a registered dietitian to discuss benefits and risks prior to adding MCT oil to your diet.

### Keep It Fresh!

MCT oil can now be purchased at many national retailers, as well as natural grocers and supplement stores. Once opened, MCT oil can be stored with or without refrigeration. If you're storing it on a shelf, make sure it's in a cool, dark place away from heat sources. Once opened, it's usually good for about two years.



#### Nutrition Info

Per serving

<b>Calories</b>	110
<b>Total Fat</b>	10g
<b>Carbohydrates</b>	2g
	Fiber 1g
	Sugar 1g
<b>Protein</b>	8g

### Bulletproof Coffee

One of the popular ways to incorporate MCT oil into your diet is in coffee. The brand Bulletproof is thought to have started the trend of adding MCT oil to coffee, which is why many people call this addition "bulletproof."

#### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. coffee (brewed, hot)
- ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (regular or vanilla)
- 1 tsp. MCT oil
- 1 tsp. butter (or ghee for dairy-free, paleo or whole30)

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Puree for 5 to 15 seconds, until frothy. In lieu of a blender, you can use a milk frothier to emulsify directly in your cup.

*Adapted from WholesomeYum.com*

# Mindful Minute

In the process of caring for others and fulfilling life roles with our careers and families, oftentimes our own self-care is put on the back burner. The gift of compassion is one of the most powerful gifts we can give, not only to others but also to ourselves. This month we encourage you to **practice self-compassion** by taking a mindful moment each day (or several times a day) to sit with yourself as if you are your own best friend. Tune in to the physical experience of being you, focusing on your breath, heartbeat and the physical sensations in your body. Experiment with the idea that you are worthy of your own attention and affection, and tend to your needs. Repeating self-nurturing affirmations may help you connect with this idea.

Here are some examples:

- May I be safe and peaceful.
- May I be free from suffering.
- I am worthy of love and acceptance.
- I have important work to do on this earth that only I can do. I matter.
- I am deserving of kindness.
- I love myself just as I am.
- I am enough. I have enough. I do enough.
- I heal and restore.

Develop a mantra that resonates with you. Perhaps you use one of the examples above or create your own. Write down your mantra and keep it with you as a reminder to take time to be kind and attentive to yourself.



## Flu Prevention Amid COVID-19



With influenza (flu) season here, many people are wondering how to approach flu vaccinations in the midst of a pandemic. Is it safe? Is it recommended? Is it essential? What's the best way to go about it while keeping exposure to COVID-19 at a minimum?

To tackle these questions and more, we turned to trusted guidance from

the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) website to address the most pressing questions around getting safely vaccinated for the flu during the pandemic.

The flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. Although getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, there are other important benefits of getting a flu shot, such as keeping you from getting the flu, reducing the severity of your illness if you do get the flu and reducing your risk of a flu-associated hospitalization.

Getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting you and your family's health. From a community health perspective, flu vaccination is critical this flu season, more than ever, to help reduce the overall impact of respiratory illnesses on the population and lessen the resulting burden on the healthcare system during the pandemic.

Practice everyday safety measures when going to get your flu shot and follow CDC recommendations for running essential errands. If you're worried about getting vaccinated safely, call your doctor or pharmacist to ask if they are following the CDC's vaccination pandemic guidance. Any location that is following this guidance should be a safe place to receive the vaccine. Flu vaccines are available at multiple locations, including your doctor's office, health departments and pharmacies. To find where vaccines are available near you, visit [VaccineFinder.org](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/p/2020-08-14-flu-vaccine-finder.html).

Taking care of your health protects the health of those around you. Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. It is especially important that people who are high risk for flu complications get vaccinated to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. For more information on the 2020-2021 flu season, please visit the CDC's [website](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/2020-2021-flu-season/).

# Raising Inclusive Children

It's often said that parents are their children's first teachers and role models, with their words, actions and inactions continually influencing the children, both intentionally and inadvertently. This holds true in many facets of parents' lives, including how we model and support inclusion of others from different backgrounds. While diversity references the similarities and differences among individuals, including personality and all aspects of their identity, such as race, gender or age, inclusion refers to the efforts used to embrace those differences.

For better or worse, our upbringing, life experiences, education and the communities to which we belong make up the sphere of influence from which our beliefs and actions regarding

inclusivity are typically derived. Parenthood provides an opportune time to explore how we can support, strengthen, expand or even reshape our own sphere of influence as we look to shape our children and foster inclusion. Following are some ways to intentionally model and encourage inclusivity among young children and adolescents.

### Values

We can talk with our children about what beliefs they embrace and provide feedback about how behavior and communication align with those values. For example, if you foster the "Golden Rule" principle (found in most religions and faiths) of treating others as you wish to be treated, you could talk with your children about how they demonstrate this value in their

own lives, as well as provide positive reinforcement and feedback about how the child's behavior and communication reflects this belief. For younger children, you can use make-believe play to reinforce these principles through scenarios you create and talk about with your child, such as stuffed animals inviting other stuffed animals to engage in a fun activity together, regardless of their differences in appearance, type of animal, size, etc.

### Media & Toys

Look at what kinds of books your kids read, television or online programs they watch, and toys with which they play and consider what messages those may be sending and what standards they may be normalizing. Ask yourself whether their literature

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or favorite shows adequately reflect cultures, genders, races, disabilities and other traits that are different from theirs. Moreover, note whether diverse characters are represented in favorable ways that are not based solely on stereotypes. Select books and programs that depict characters of various racial, ethnic and gender backgrounds in leadership or professional roles, for example, in an effort to demonstrate and normalize their equality and ability. Point out where characters in books and shows reflect inclusive values. In cases where they do not, talk with your children about how the characters could do so, including re-enacting scenarios. Although news reports of injustice can be disturbing, they can lead to important discussions. Use these as opportunities to explain differences in society and give a balanced view.

## Friends & Associates

Do an inventory of your own family, friends and individuals with whom you associate in your community, including school, church, neighborhood, etc., and evaluate how much your children are exposed to individuals from diverse backgrounds. If the communities in which your family participates lack diversity and inclusion, expand your

circles. Consider placing your children in schools with greater diversity, enrolling them in community sports leagues and summer camps that reflect inclusion, and/or attending community events where they can develop relationships with children from different backgrounds. You can model this through the relationships you create, as well.

## Cultural Education

Providing children with opportunities to learn about different cultures can be a paramount part of their education, cultivating a sense of curiosity and awareness. While school curriculum may touch on different cultures to varying degrees, you can supplement their education to model and nurture an ongoing love of learning and appreciation of other cultures. Travel to different states and countries can offer children and adults alike a rich introduction to different cultures and help gain an appreciation of the unique aspects of those cultures, including food, language, music and more. It can also provide the valuable experience of revealing fundamental similarities and shared identities and values. Visiting museums, reading books, trying new foods and learning a different

language can also encourage curiosity, appreciation and inclusion. Multicultural festivals and concerts can be a fun way to experience different cultures, especially if you have been educating your children on those cultures prior to the events.

When it comes to exposing children to diversity and inclusion, it is ideal to start when they are young. Even before they learn to talk, children can learn other kids come in all different colors and sizes. Preparing them before they enter a diverse population (such as before they start school) will make them better equipped to welcome children from other backgrounds.

To summarize, raising inclusive children begins with us as parents. To foster inclusivity, assess whether you are inviting of diversity by reflecting on your values, mixing your media, widening your circles, exploring other cultures and encouraging discussion. Children learn through their role models, so ensure you are sending consistent, clear messages and be mindful of how you talk about and interact with diverse populations.



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