

# Ways to Take Care of Ourselves – for Family Members and Caregivers

## H.A.L.T.

H.A.L.T. is an acronym that stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. With H.A.L.T., you build a habit of asking yourself if you're hungry, angry, lonely or tired. If the answer is yes, you should halt, or stop, and take care of your basic needs. Take a short break to eat, do something calming, call a friend or close your eyes. These states don't need to control you. Instead, you take care of yourself by addressing your needs.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique

When you're overwhelmed, anxious or afraid, you can feel like there's an emergency even if there isn't. The 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique takes your focus off your racing thoughts and back to the reality of this moment. You focus on what you perceive with your senses. Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you pause and notice five things you see, four things you hear, three things you feel, two things you smell, and one thing you taste.

- 5 — Five things I see around me:
- 4 — Four things I hear:
- 3 — Three things I can touch:
- 2 — Two things I can smell:
- 1 — One thing I can taste:

## Meditation

Meditation can be a great way to learn about the connection between your body, your emotions and your mind. There are many forms of meditation, but in general, meditation is a way of practicing awareness of whatever is going on in your mind and body. You can meditate while sitting in a chair, or while walking. You can meditate while your mind is busy and while it's calm. You can meditate for thirty minutes or for three. The goal is not to empty your mind or to feel at peace — it's just to practice being aware of the moment you're in. There are many studies showing that meditation can reduce stress and help improve chronic health problems. Books about mindfulness that you may find helpful include:

- *Peace is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *You Are Here* by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Mark Williams and Danny Penman
- Insight Timer app — free app for meditation and sleep with over 25,000 guided meditations

## Healthy lifestyle

How much you sleep, what you eat and how often you exercise really do matter. These things influence our mood, our ability to make decisions, our risk of getting serious diseases, and more. We can get support from people who care about us and from professionals, but ultimately, we make countless daily choices about how we treat ourselves.

## Remember:

- Put on your oxygen mask before you help your child or neighbor!
- Why? So, you don't pass out before you can assist others!

A great way to take care of yourself is to attend a NAMI class, support group or presentation!