

# Taking Care of Others Means. . .

## Taking Care of ME

A caregiver self-care packet from Family Of a Vet

*I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self indulgent.*

*Caring for myself is an act of survival. ~Audre Lorde*

### Our wish for you. . .

Our wish for you is that at the end of each day you find peace and that along the way you find yourself and your hero surrounded by people who work to understand the sacrifices your family is making. As heroes and families, our paths are not easy. But together . . . with strength that comes from shared stories and experiences . . . we can ensure that our journeys continue to make a difference. Thank you – for everything you do for your hero and family, and as a result, for your country. You are **amazing!**

### Signs of Caregiver Stress

As a caregiver, you may be so focused on your loved one that you don't realize that your own health and well-being are suffering. Watch for these signs of caregiver stress:

- Feeling tired most of the time
- Feeling overwhelmed and irritable
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy

Too much stress, especially over a long time, can harm your health. As a caregiver, you're more likely to experience symptoms of depression or anxiety. In addition, you may not get enough physical activity or eat a balanced diet, which only increases your risk of medical problems, such as heart disease and diabetes.



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**Helping heroes and families with PTSD, TBI, & Life After Combat™**

## Signs of Secondary PTSD

Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder occurs when a person has an indirect exposure to risk or trauma (such as living with a veteran with PTSD) resulting in many of the same symptoms as a full-blown diagnosis of PTSD.

Secondary PTSD may make you feel:

- overly angry or enraged (even during calm periods)
- depressed
- exhausted (and/or suffering from insomnia)
- overwhelmed
- Anxious

Below are links to our Secondary PTSD articles, blogs, and radio show:

Secondary PTSD

[http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary\\_ptsd.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary_ptsd.html)

Broken Pieces

[http://www.familyofavet.com/broken\\_pieces.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/broken_pieces.html)

Secondary PTSD in Children

[http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary\\_ptsd\\_children.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary_ptsd_children.html)

Military & Veteran Families Face Stress and Secondary PTSD

[http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary\\_ptsd\\_children\\_coping.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/secondary_ptsd_children_coping.html)

Coping With a Spouse Who Has PTSD

[http://www.familyofavet.com/coping\\_skills\\_PTSD\\_spouse.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/coping_skills_PTSD_spouse.html)

YouTube

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2eeV\\_ZlyWQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2eeV_ZlyWQ)

*If you are always trying to be normal you will never know how amazing you can be. ~Maya Angelou*

## **Taking Off the Cape—How to Deal with Life as a Caregiver**

1. Reaching out for or accepting help can be difficult, but becomes easier with practice. You may have to initiate or locate people who are willing to help.
2. Get comfortable letting your veteran do whatever he/she can independently and don't feel guilty.
3. Educate yourself about medications, medical procedures, and healthy choices for your entire family.
4. Connect with others—support groups, church, friends and family.
5. Replenish your soul by finding time to do things that restore you. Read, walk, take a bath, get your hair done, meet a friend, engage in a hobby, write in a journal. Taking time for yourself helps you be at your best for your veteran and your family.
6. Talk to someone you trust. Whether that person is someone you know or you seek professional care, expressing your feelings is important and will help you gain perspective.
7. Take care of your body. Get regular exercise, eat a balanced meal, practice good sleep habits, take a daily vitamin. (Yes, I realize how difficult this can be.) Take frequent breaks. Breathe.
8. Set boundaries for yourself, your veteran, your children, the neighbors, your boss, whoever is demanding more of your time than you can give. Learn to say no. I promise the world will not stop turning.
9. Schedule time to worry. Sounds crazy, but it works! Set aside a time each day to deal with those things that must be done and cause great stress (such as paying bills or scheduling appointments). Get the job done and move on. As issues pop up (and they surely will) give yourself a few minutes to strategize and write down a plan, then let it go.
10. Count your blessings. Simple, but true. When we have those “oh no” moments pop up we need to remind ourselves of what is truly important. .

*You more than anyone else in the world deserve your love and affection.  
~Buddha*

## **Soothe Body and Soul**

### **Hot Lemon Tea**

Ingredients: 1 green tea bag, 1 c hot water, 3 TBSP lemon juice, 1 tsp vanilla extract, 2 TBSP agave syrup (or other sweetener), cinnamon stick (if desired)

Directions: Steep tea bag in boiling hot water for 4-5 minutes. Discard tea bag. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla extract. Slowly stir in agave syrup, adjusting to your liking. Garnish with a cinnamon stick if desired. Makes one serving.

### **Sleepy-Time Milk**

Ingredients: 1 c milk, 1 tsp honey, splash of vanilla, 1 pinch of ground cinnamon

Directions: Place milk in a mug and microwave until desired temperature (2-3 minutes). Stir in honey and vanilla. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

### **Rejuvenating Pumpkin Mask**

Ingredients: ½ c fresh pumpkin pulp, 2 eggs, 2 tsp almond milk (for dry or combo skin), 1 tsp honey (for dry skin), 2 tsp apple cider vinegar or cranberry juice (for oily skin)

Directions: Purée the pumpkin into a thick paste. Add the eggs. Stir in remaining ingredients depending on skin type. Mix well. Apply the mask, leaving it on for 15-20 minutes, depending on sensitivity. Rinse with cool water and moisturize as usual.

### **Milk and Cinnamon Facial**

Ingredients: 1 TBSP milk, ½ tsp cinnamon, 2 TBSP honey, 1 tsp vanilla

Directions: This inexpensive mixture will pamper your complexion. In a bowl mix milk, cinnamon, honey, and vanilla. Spread the paste uniformly on clear skin. Leave the facial on for 15 minutes then rinse it off with tepid water.

### **Relieve Puffy Eyes**

If your eyes are red and puffy from a long day spent squinting at the screen or lack of sleep, lie down, prop your feet up and use one of the following treats to soothe and pamper.

- Lay thinly sliced cucumber on your eyes.
- Use damp, used tea bags, or cotton squares dampened with cool tea.
- Lay an unopened bag of frozen peas over the cucumber slices, tea bags, or
- Cotton squares. The added cold compress will help reduce swelling.

## Shower Therapy

No time for a long hot soak in the tub? Here's an easy way to get the relaxing benefits of a hot bath when you are short on time (or privacy).

Scent a wet washcloth with four or five drops of your favorite essential oil. Tuck the washcloth into a corner on your shower floor, and let the hot water run for a few minutes, allowing steam and scent to fill the room. Breathe deeply, and exhale slowly.

Citrus scents are excellent mood boosters. Try lemon, lime, grapefruit, tangerine and orange. The essential oils of bergamot, rosemary, and cardamom can also lift your mood. Need to mellow? Pick up soothing scents like lavender, clay sage, sandalwood, chamomile, or pine.

## Journaling

Putting pen to paper and getting your thoughts out of your head can be immensely freeing and therapeutic. All you need is a notebook, pen, and a few minutes of quiet.

- There is no right or wrong way to journal—just put pen to paper.
- Journaling can consist of feelings, ideas, prayers, frustrations, disappointments, goals, hopes, aspirations, even doodles!
- No starting over, no editing. This is just for YOU.
- Journal daily, for a few uninterrupted minutes (even if that means you're writing in the bathroom with the shower running or in the car in the doctor's office parking lot).
- Reflect on your writing from time to time. Have you been completely honest with yourself? How have things changed? Has healing occurred? Are there themes that continue to repeat themselves and, if so, how can you address them (goals to accomplish, roadblocks to remove)?

*The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern.*

*Beautiful people do not just happen.*

*~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross*

## **An up close and personal look at FOV:**

*I'm here to say that while we may be broken we will never be defeated for one simple reason... our hearts for one another beat too strong.*

*~Brannan Vines, Founder*

<http://blog.familyofavet.com/2012/07/FamilyOfaVet-5thBirthday.html>

### **Who we are...**

Family Of a Vet (FOV) is service members and those who love them... all people who are living every day with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and the other challenges that come with life after the battlefield. We are working together to use the knowledge, experience, and real-life coping skills we've learned to help others just like us. To put it simply, we want to help because we've been (and are living) in your shoes.

### **What we do...**

Our goal is to provide education and real-world, plain-language information to heroes, families, and anyone else who is concerned about those who have served our country... and to make sure service members and those who love them know that they *are not* alone in the challenges they face in life after combat. Life with PTSD and TBI can be a lonely, hard battle that impacts not only the warrior, but everyone in his or her life. But, those battles don't have to defeat us... and we definitely don't have to fight them alone.

### **Where to find us...**

We have volunteers (service members and those who love them) in forty-seven states and five countries working hard to reach out to others like them and offer real-world information and life-tested coping skills. But more importantly, you can find us and the information you need 24 hours a day online! We use our website, a variety of social media platforms, a twice-weekly internet radio show (with free archive downloads), our blogs, and more to make sure you can find a friendly "voice" and the information you need any time you need it. We're here to help and we're literally just a few clicks away!

**Family Of a Vet is a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to helping veterans and their families learn how to cope with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), TBI (traumatic brain injury) and life after combat through real-world, plain language education and resources for heroes, families, and communities.**

## Show Your Love

From Veteran's Day (and ending on Valentine's Day), we're launching The Love Letter Campaign... a campaign to encourage those who love a hero to write a letter sharing their story (where they started, what they've faced together, and why their love endures). It's not just for spouses, but also for parents, siblings, caregivers, and friends. It's about telling the "rest" of our stories... stories that continue despite PTSD, TBI, and the challenges of life after combat.

<http://blog.familyofavet.com/p/love-letter-campaign.html>

## Sample our Life After Combat™ Radio Show:

Visit our Blog Talk Radio archives at [www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet) to hear all our past shows, or download free from iTunes and listen on your mobile device.

Caregiver Care: Learning to Take Care of Yourself

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet/2011/09/13/caregiver-care-learning-to-take-care-of-yourself>

Taking Control: Secrets of an Organized Life

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet/2012/04/10/taking-control-secrets-of-an-organized-life>

Learn Tapping Techniques for Stress and Trauma Relief

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet/2012/07/17/learn-tapping-techniques-for-stress-trauma-relief>

Caregiving and Sex: A Reality Check

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet/2012/09/18/empowerment-creating-a-new-story>

Secondary PTSD: What You Need to Know

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet/2012/02/08/secondary-ptsd-what-you-need-to-know>

## CONNECT WITH US ONLINE...

Website: [www.FamilyOfaVet.com](http://www.FamilyOfaVet.com)

PTSD/TBI Life Blog: [blog.familyofavet.com](http://blog.familyofavet.com)

BlogTalk: [www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/familyofavet)

News & Headlines Blog: [news.familyofavet.com](http://news.familyofavet.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/lifeaftercombat](http://www.facebook.com/lifeaftercombat)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/familyofavet](http://www.twitter.com/familyofavet)