

Self-Care



When a burn injury happens, the patient and their supporters naturally focus on physical recovery first. It is common for mental recovery to have a delayed start. Caregivers/support systems might tend to focus solely on your body's recovery, so other healing may be forgotten or put off. It is important to devote some energy to mental health recovery. It is equally important for caregivers to find ways to continue their own self-care during all stages of supporting a survivor's burn injury. Here are some forms of self-care for you and your loved ones to help with mental recovery.

In the Hospital

Caregivers / Supporters

- **Take a walk outside** – For many supporters it feels hard to leave the survivor in the hospital room, but sometimes it is good for both of you to take a break and have some alone time. When you have some time, get out and take a walk around the hospital, go somewhere, run an errand, or grab a meal. A walk is a great way to lower your stress level and give yourself space to process without others' input.
- **Take time for yourself** – It may be hard to not come to the hospital if you are used to being there every day, but taking time to see friends, go to a planned event, or even just having downtime or taking a long shower at home can ultimately recharge you and make you a better caregiver when you are present at your loved one's bedside.
- **Rest** – Trying to balance supporting a loved one in the hospital with a job or taking care of a family is incredibly exhausting. Make sure you are getting enough sleep and rest to be able to continue doing both. Sometimes this means leaving early or setting boundaries for yourself about when you are at the hospital.
- **Talk to someone** – This can be a healthcare/mental health professional in the burn unit or outside of the hospital. This can be a friend or loved one. It doesn't matter who it is as long as it is someone you can talk to who can focus on being there specifically for you and how you are processing and that the focus isn't exclusively on how your loved one in the burn unit is doing.

Patient

- **Meditation or Breathing** – In the hospital survivors are limited to their room or even their bed. They must find ways to take care while in that space. Breathing and meditation are great ways to do this. Whether you do this on your own, with your care team, or using a video/app, breathing and meditation can be incredibly helpful during stressful or painful times.
- **Write or Journal** – Sometimes it is hard for survivors to express what is going on in this difficult time. Writing down your thoughts can be a helpful way to process your burn injury.
- **Bring the Outside In** – While you may not be able to go outside or home, you can have loved ones bring in pictures or reminders of some of your favorite spaces. Whether it is a photo of your family or a pillow from home, reminders of the outside can help transport you during hard times.

For any additional questions or support navigating any of the resources listed above, please contact AARBF:

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Self-Care

(continued)



Both

- **Reach out within the burn community** – Peer support and support groups are great ways to meet survivors and their caregivers who have been in your same place. Hearing someone else has experienced a similar thing and survived can be incredibly therapeutic and a good reminder that you are not alone. Listening to others' experiences can provide wonderful suggestions of what helped them that may then help you in your recovery.
- **What You Love** – Find ways to bring in your hobbies or passions. If it is music, art, travel, or relaxation, there are ways to still engage while in the hospital. Some survivors have suggested playing music in the background, especially during stressful times; taking an online art class or continuing to draw if possible; watching travel shows and thinking of the places you can go in the future; reading or listening to audiobooks.

Going Home

Once you've left the hospital, it is important to continue self-care and continue to reach out and stay connected to loved ones, friends, and the burn community. As a patient (now turned survivor!) you are able to adapt your self-care, reintegrating into out-of-hospital activities and prior passions. It is important to find ways to relax and take care of yourself throughout every stage of your recovery.

- **Utilize the Five Senses**
 - **Sight:** read a book, attend virtual museums, watch a new television show or movie alone or with others, observe nature, look at or take new pictures of your world and loved ones
 - **Smell:** bake cookies or try a new recipe, light a scented candle, use fabric softener on your bedding, use your favorite lotion or perfume, smell lavender, try deep breathing
 - **Touch:** wear comfortable clothing, paint, cuddle your pet, take a bath or shower, use a fidget cube, make your own stress ball with balloons and rice/or sand, go outside and feel the breeze/sunshine
 - **Sound:** listen to music, meditate, laugh, play a comedy special, pick up an instrument
 - **Taste:** eat your favorite food/dessert in moderation, eat mindfully and focus on texture and taste, try something new, have tea/coffee/hot chocolate



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