



Respite Tip Sheet #001

What is Respite Care?

Respite care is planned or emergency care provided to a child or adult with developmental disabilities in order to provide temporary relief to, or a short break for, family caregivers who are caring for that child or adult. (archrespite.org).

Caregivers, and their families, who do not take regular and sufficient amounts of respite time to do the things they want and need to do, often experience greater stress, which can take a toll on their mental and physical health. Importantly, research shows that respite which is personalized and purposely planned, benefits not only caregivers, but all family members, including siblings or a spouse or partner. (lifecoursetools.com)

Make respite a habit. Use it to take care of YOU. You need to take short breaks to stay strong. If you are strong, that helps keep your family strong. Don't wait until you crash and burn, use it to prevent a crisis or stress overload. Do not feel guilty about taking care of yourself. Airplane passengers are instructed to use the oxygen themselves first in an emergency before trying to help others. Respite care is like that. You have to take care of YOU so you can then take care of your family.

Every family's situation is different. Some need more respite than others. Some care recipients require

more physical assistance or more help in controlling their emotions. There are hundreds or reasons to use respite and hundreds of things to do when you get a break.

Getting a break allows you to relax, take care of errands, spend time with other family members, handle emergencies, go shopping, take a vacation, take care of medical needs, or any of a hundred other things that are important to you. You could use respite to begin doing something you used to enjoy but had to give up when your family responsibilities got in the way.

There may be times when you need a break to just sit, do nothing, and recharge yourself. But be careful about using all your breaks to do nothing. Be purposeful in using respite. Give some thought to how you will benefit and what you want to do that would be meaningful to you. Embrace your respite and do something just for you. Respite makes the biggest difference if you begin using it regularly and before you are suffering the ill effects of stress.

Pony Bird has resources available to help you create a meaningful respite plan for you and your family. There are videos that can be found at ponybird.org on Finding Good Respite through the Charting the LifeCourse framework. You can also find videos and tools on lifecoursetools.com.



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