



# The “Atenda Ten”

10 Helpful Tips for Dementia Caregiving





# hello

## GREETINGS FROM ATENDA'S FOUNDER:

I've heard it said that if you've met one person with dementia, you've met only one person with dementia. Every journey is unique for the person living with it and for the family walking alongside them. What helps one person may not help another, and what works today might not work tomorrow.

That's why we created the **Atenda Ten**: ten guiding principles to lean on. They're not rigid rules, but flexible touchstones to help you respond with patience, clarity, and confidence. Read them from start to finish. Each stands alone, yet they work best together.

Many of these habits, speaking slowly, offering two simple choices, keeping routines, can prevent confusion and frustration before they start. Think of this guide as both a compass for tough moments and a way to smooth the path ahead.

This is also why we built Atenda.Care: to be your steady companion, to remind you that you are never alone, and to help you find your footing no matter what comes next. Please read these principles, share them with your family, and keep them close.

And please don't expect yourself to follow them perfectly. No one can. Caregiving is trial and error. What matters most are the victories: the moments when a gentle word, a patient pause, or a small adjustment brings calm, connection, or a smile. Celebrate those wins. Let them build on one another. Over time, your loved one's relief, laughter, and moments of recognition will reinforce your efforts and give you strength.

You'll also face situations these ten tips don't cover. That's okay. It will happen. When it does, know we're here. Share your challenges and your successes with us. We'll pass them along anonymously to others walking the same road. Because we really *are* in this together.

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<b>ONE</b>	4
Person-Centered Care	
<b>TWO</b>	6
Step Into Their World	
<b>THREE</b>	8
Communicate Simply & Empathetically	
<b>FOUR</b>	10
Show Compassion & Instill Hope	
<b>FIVE</b>	12
Establish Predictive Routines	
<b>SIX</b>	14
Use Redirection & Distraction	
<b>SEVEN</b>	16
Prioritize Safety & Adaption	
<b>EIGHT</b>	18
Engage in Meaningful Activities	
<b>NINE</b>	20
Educate Yourself & Seek Resources	
<b>TEN</b>	22
Prioritize Self Care	



## TIP ONE:

# 1

# Person-Centered Care

See the person first; not the disease, not the diagnosis.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Don't Assume

When your loved one says, "I can do it myself," don't assume that means they want to be left alone. What they're often expressing is dignity. Step in gently, accompany them, and make sure they feel comfortable and supported.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia may change memory, language, or behavior — but it never erases the person. Each person carries a lifetime of history and identity. Caregiving is not just about protecting health — it is about protecting personhood.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Assuming too quickly either way: "they can't do it" or "they don't need help" can strip away independence or risk safety. Person-centered care balances both.



### When to Use It:

All the time.



#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Taking over tasks without explanation, which robs them of dignity.
- Ignoring requests for independence, which may leave them unsafe.
- Talking about them instead of to them.



#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- Cooperate gently rather than asking outright. Instead of "Do you need help?" you might quietly step in and say, "Here, I'll hold this while you do that."
- Validate and agree. If they insist, "I can do it," respond with, "Of course — let me just make sure everything you need is ready." Then quietly accompany them in their task.
- Maintain presence without smothering. Step in enough to ensure safety, then step back to let them feel capable.

## EXAMPLE

Evelyn's husband wanted to shower on his own. Instead of leaving him or insisting she help, she said, "Let me go in first and make sure you have everything you need; towel, soap, and clothes; and then I'll step out." He felt respected, she felt reassured, and both dignity and safety were preserved.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

*Don't assume. Look deeper.*

*Honor dignity while staying close enough to ensure safety.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Offer help through cooperation, not correction. Gently validate their independence while quietly supporting their needs.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can create a simple summary of your loved one's history, routines, and preferences from what you've shared in her intake and journal. You can print this to share with family before visits, so they know how to connect in meaningful ways. And when you print out your journal for a doctor, you can also include these personal details; helping medical staff see the whole person, not just the symptoms. At the same time, Atenda can be proactive, reminding you of principles that are easy to forget in the rush of daily care; like gently cooperating instead of asking permission. Caregivers often feel guilty about slipping up on these basics. Atenda's reminders are there to ease that burden. This is a marathon, not a sprint.





## TIP TWO:

# 2

## Step Into Their World

Validation is connection. Enter your loved one's world instead of pulling them into yours.



**OVERRIDING MINDSET: Respect Their World, Wherever It Is**  
Their world may be shaped by past memories, present obsessions, or small details others overlook. Sometimes it means longing for a parent who passed decades ago. Other times, it may mean worrying about a pet that's sitting right at their feet. Whatever their focus, that is their current reality, and it deserves respect.

### PHILOSOPHY

Correction often closes doors. Validation opens them. Stepping into their world is not about deception; it's about presence. It is saying: "I see the world through your eyes right now, and I will be here with you."

### WHY IT MATTERS

When we argue or dismiss, our loved one feels unseen and unsafe. When we join them, trust grows, and anxiety eases.



### When to Use It:

When your loved one fixates on a memory, a worry, or even an object in the present. The key is not whether it is "true" but whether it feels real to them.



#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Correcting: "Your mom died years ago."
- Minimizing: "Don't worry, the dog's right there."
- Dismissing: "That doesn't matter right now."



#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- Invite thoughts instead of testing memory: "Share with me some of your thoughts about your mom."
- Acknowledge present focus: "Oh, Katie, there she is. She's such a wonderful dog. What do you like most about her?"
- Use presence as validation: sit with them, hold a hand, or rest quietly beside them if words feel heavy.

## EXAMPLES

1. When Sam's mother asked, "Where's my mom?" he resisted correction. Instead, he gently said, "Share with me some of your thoughts about your mom." She smiled and described Sunday dinners, turning sadness into warmth.
2. When Ellen's father anxiously asked about Katie the dog - even though Katie lay at his feet - Ellen stepped into his world. She said, "Oh, Katie, there she is. She's such a wonderful dog. What do you like most about her?" He reached down, petting Katie, and began sharing happy memories, his anxiety replaced with joy.

Sometimes, stepping into their world isn't verbal at all. Sitting quietly and offering your presence may be the most powerful validation.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

*Reality is not about facts, it's about presence.*

*Wherever your loved one is, that's where love and connection begin.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Don't correct, redirect, or dismiss. Join. Wherever they are; past, present, or imagined; step in with patience and care.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can notice repeated themes in your journals such as frequent mentions of a parent or a pet, and suggest validating responses that help you join instead of correct. You can print these summaries to share with visiting family so they understand how best to connect. And when you print your journal for a doctor, you can include these personal details, helping medical staff see the whole person, not just the symptoms. At the same time, Atenda can be proactive, reminding you that you don't need to feel guilty for choosing validation over correction. Caregiving is not about winning arguments; it's about creating comfort. And if you feel unsure about what to say in the moment, Atenda's Coach Mode can role-play with you. You can practice responding to questions like "Where's my mom?" or "Where's the dog?" until the words feel natural and supportive, so you're ready when it happens in real life.





## TIP THREE:

# 3

## Communicate Simply & Empathetically

How you speak can be as important as what you say. Simplicity and empathy make it possible for your loved one to follow, engage, and feel respected.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Clarity Over Complexity

Don't assume that long explanations or multi-step directions will help. They often overwhelm. Instead, slow down, use short sentences, and look for understanding in expressions and body language. Communication is as much about how you make them feel as it is about passing along information.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia alters how the brain processes language. Words can slip away. Choices can feel confusing. By simplifying your communication, you reduce frustration and open a path to connection. By layering empathy onto simplicity, you let them know that you are on their side, not rushing or judging them.

### Why It Matters

When caregivers repeat themselves in frustration or correct mistakes harshly, it can make loved ones feel small or inadequate. Simple and empathetic communication preserves dignity and trust.



### When to Use It:

All the time. During meals, bathing, dressing, medication routines, or any activity where directions or choices are needed.

#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- ✘ Giving multi-step instructions: "Go upstairs, brush your teeth, and change into pajamas."
- Asking open-ended questions: "What do you want to eat?"
- Correcting every mistake in speech or memory.
- Talking over them or finishing their sentences in frustration.

#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- ✓ Break tasks into one step at a time: "Let's brush teeth first."
- Offer two clear choices: "Would you like soup or a sandwich?"
- Use patience and reassurance: "Take your time, I'm listening."
- Speak slowly and with warmth. Silence is not failure — it's space to think.

## EXAMPLES

1. Anna found her mother froze when asked what she wanted for lunch. Switching to two-choice questions unlocked calm and smiles.
2. David simplified “get ready for bed” into small steps, transforming resistance into cooperation.
3. Carla, noticing her husband searching for a word, gently said, “Take your time, I’m listening.” His tension eased, and he carried on without shame.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

*It's not just what you say; it's how you say it.  
Simplicity plus empathy preserves dignity.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Slow down. Use short, clear sentences. Pay attention to tone and body language; they often carry more meaning than words.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can track frustrations you log, like “Dad got upset at bedtime instructions,” and suggest simpler alternatives such as breaking directions into steps or offering two-choice questions. You can print these communication strategies to share with family so everyone uses the same approach, keeping interactions calmer and more consistent. And remember: feeling guilty because you can’t always follow these rules is normal. Don’t be discouraged. Just resolve to improve the next time. If you feel unsure about phrasing, Atenda’s Coach Mode lets you practice. You can role-play situations like “What do you want to eat?” versus “Would you like soup or a sandwich?” so you feel more natural and confident when the moment comes.





## TIP FOUR:

# 4

## Show Compassion & Instill Hope

Compassion reassures your loved one that they are still valued. Hope reminds both of you that joy and connection are still possible, even in the face of decline.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Lead with Reassurance

Don't assume sadness or frustration means your loved one has given up. What they usually need in those moments is comfort and confidence that they still matter.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia can strip away abilities, but it never erases the need for kindness and encouragement. Compassion says, "You are not a burden." Hope says, "There is still joy ahead." Together, they give meaning to the journey and strength to keep moving forward.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Without compassion, caregiving can feel cold and task-oriented. Without hope, the future can feel empty. Offering both helps sustain dignity and spirit, for your loved one and for yourself.



### When to Use It:

During moments of sadness, discouragement, or frustration — and even during daily routines where a word of encouragement can brighten the moment.



#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Dismissing feelings: "Don't be silly, you're fine."
- Offering false cheer: "Everything will be okay" (when it may not).
- Ignoring signs of sadness or discouragement.



#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- Acknowledge feelings honestly: "That must feel discouraging."
- Offer physical reassurance: a hand squeeze, a hug, a gentle touch on the shoulder.
- Affirm identity and worth: "You're still the best partner I could ever ask for."
- Celebrate small joys and moments of connection.

## EXAMPLES

1. When Maria's husband sighed, "I can't do anything right anymore," she took his hand and said, "You are still the best partner I could ever ask for." His shoulders relaxed, and a smile returned.
2. When Angela noticed her mom crying after forgetting a word, she said, "I understand. It hurts to forget things. I'm just glad we're here together." Her mom calmed down, and the tears gave way to peace.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Compassion is fuel. Compassion is sharing.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Hope doesn't mean false promises. It means reminding your loved one of their worth and pointing to the joys that still exist, no matter how small.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can highlight positive patterns in your journals; like "She laughed three times this week during music", so you can see reasons for hope, even on tough days. You can also print these uplifting notes to share with other family members, helping everyone stay encouraged. If you feel unsure how to respond in the moment, Atenda's Coach Mode lets you practice compassionate replies. You can role-play situations like when a loved one says, "I'm useless now," and learn how to respond with empathy and reassurance. And you shouldn't feel guilty that you don't always say the perfect thing. Remember this: it's extremely difficult to get it right all the time, and feeling guilt is normal. The key is that each one moment of compassion or "getting it right" makes a big difference. You'll find your loved one often responds and rewards you; and with time, you'll be "getting it right" more often.





## TIP FIVE:

# 5

## Establish Predictive Routines

Routine builds a sense of safety. Predictability lowers anxiety, reduces confusion, and creates calm for both the caregiver and the person with dementia.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Be Proactive

Don't wait until agitation starts before creating structure. Be one step ahead by establishing routines and cues early, so your loved one knows what to expect before anxiety sets in.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia often makes time feel slippery. Without a sense of what comes next, the day can feel chaotic. Routines anchor the day, giving comfort and a sense of control.

### WHY IT MATTERS

When every day feels unpredictable, your loved one may feel unsafe and unsettled. Consistent routines reduce repetitive questions, calm restlessness, and create smoother transitions for daily tasks.



### When to Use It:

Morning and bedtime routines, mealtimes, bathing, or any repeated daily activity. Even small rituals; a prayer before meals, the same radio program at breakfast — can bring comfort.

#### ✘ *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Changing the order of activities every day.
- Surprising them with unexpected outings or visitors without preparation.
- Giving vague cues like “It's time to get ready” without context.

#### ✔ *Better Ideas Instead*

- Use visual aids: calendars, clocks, or whiteboards showing daily tasks.
- Pair routines with sensory cues: dimming bedtime lights, playing soft morning music.
- Gently narrate the day: “First we'll have breakfast, then we'll water the plants.”
- Prepare them for changes: “Your sister is visiting later, after lunch.”

## EXAMPLES

1. Marcia found her father resisted bedtime until she established a sequence: soft music, tea, brushing teeth, then pajamas. Soon, evenings became calm and predictable.
2. A caregiver used a kitchen whiteboard to list daily activities. Her mother checked it each morning and felt calmer knowing what was planned.
3. One AtendaCare member set Atenda to announce every day at noon: “It’s lunchtime, and Atenda wants to remind you that Bob loves you.” The simple routine not only kept meals on schedule but added an emotional anchor that brought comfort and joy.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Predictability is peace. Even small routines can make big differences in mood and cooperation.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Consistency is comforting. Use routines to reduce questions and prevent confusion before it starts.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can track patterns from your journals - noticing, for example, that mornings are calmer when breakfast happens at the same time. It can suggest routines, remind you to keep them steady, and generate simple schedules you can share with visiting family. If you feel awkward setting up a new routine, Atenda’s Coach Mode can role-play with you. You can practice phrases like, “First we’ll have lunch, then we’ll go outside,” until it feels natural and easy to say. And if you slip - if the day gets disrupted and the routine falls apart - don’t feel guilty. That’s normal. What matters is coming back to consistency as often as possible.





## TIP SIX:

# 6

## Use Redirection & Distraction

When emotions run high, reasoning usually fails. Gentle redirection or distraction can shift agitation into calm without conflict.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Kindness in Motion

Don't argue or try to prove your point. When stress rises, the best gift you can give is a different focus — one that brings comfort or purpose.

### PHILOSOPHY

Arguing escalates stress. Redirecting gives your loved one an “exit ramp” — a way to leave frustration behind without shame. Distraction isn't trickery; it's a compassionate strategy to keep the moment safe and steady.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Repetitive questions, unsafe behaviors, and anxious fixations are common. Reasoning or correcting rarely works. By redirecting attention, you break the cycle of anxiety and replace it with peace.



### When to Use It:

During repetitive questions, when your loved one is fixated on something that increases anxiety, and in moments of agitation or unsafe behavior.

#### ✘ *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Arguing or insisting: “We already talked about that.”
- Correcting sharply: “You don't need to do laundry, it's already finished.”
- Ignoring the behavior and hoping it stops on its own.

#### ✔ *Better Ideas Instead*

- Gently redirect to a safe, familiar task: “Could you help me fold these towels?”
- Use music, photos, or food as calming alternatives.
- Redirect with validation: “Yes, the laundry is important. Could you help me put these clothes away?”

## EXAMPLES

1. Linda's mom often became fixated on doing laundry every afternoon, convinced it needed to be done. Instead of arguing, Linda handed her a small basket of clothes to put away. Sorting through them eased her mom's anxiety and gave her purpose.
2. A caregiver whose father repeatedly asked about the car keys redirected him by inviting him to the porch to look at the sunset. His restlessness subsided as the conversation turned toward the colors in the sky.
3. Another family used music as redirection. When their loved one became agitated, they played a favorite song from his youth. Within minutes, he was singing along, smiling instead of pacing.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Redirection is not deception. It is kindness in motion.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Keep a "toolbox" of distractions ready - laundry, music, photo albums, snacks, or a short walk. Use warmth, not force, to shift focus.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can learn which redirection strategies work best for your loved one. If laundry tasks calm them, or if music brings joy, Atenda will remind you to try these options when restlessness appears. You can also print a summary of "what works" for visiting family or respite helpers so they can respond the same way you do. If you're not sure what to say in the moment, Atenda's Coach Mode can role-play with you. You can practice responses to repetitive questions or anxious fixations until they feel natural, so you're confident when stress rises.





## TIP SEVEN:

# 7

## Prioritize Safety & Adaptation

A safe environment helps independence last longer. Adapting the home and routines prevents accidents before they happen.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Be Proactive

Don't wait until after a fall or accident to make changes. Anticipate risks and adapt early so safety becomes part of daily life without feeling like a restriction.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia can affect balance, judgment, and awareness. What once felt harmless (a throw rug, a cluttered hallway, an unlocked door) can become dangerous. Safety isn't about limiting freedom; it's about protecting dignity and preserving independence as long as possible.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Falls, wandering, and confusion can create crises. By adapting the environment early, you reduce emergencies and give your loved one confidence to move more freely.



### When to Use It:

From the earliest stages of dementia, and revisited often as needs change.



#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Waiting until an accident happens before making changes.
- Assuming “she’s careful” or “he knows the house well enough.”
- Making big safety changes all at once without explanation.



#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- Remove small risks early (like scatter rugs) before they become hazards.
- Add supportive tools gradually — grab bars, brighter lighting, shower chairs.
- Involve your loved one when possible: “I added this light so we can see the steps better.”
- Review routines regularly to spot new risks (fatigue at night, confusion during outings).

## EXAMPLES

1. Carlos removed scatter rugs and installed grab bars before his mother needed them. When her balance worsened, she kept independence longer because supports were already in place.
2. Ellen noticed her father stumbling in dim hallways. She replaced bulbs with brighter ones and added nightlights; his confidence at night improved and falls were prevented.
3. A family whose loved one wandered installed a keypad lock and gave visiting relatives the code; wandering stopped without shame or confrontation.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Safety is love in action.*

*Small adaptations today prevent crises tomorrow.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Think prevention, not reaction. Look at the home through your loved one's eyes: "Could this cause harm if confusion strikes?"

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can log near-misses (a stumble, an almost-fall) and flag patterns that suggest changes are needed. It can generate safety checklists tailored to your home and routines, and you can print these to share with family so everyone is aligned. If you're unsure how to explain a new safety step — like adding a shower chair or using a lock — Atenda's Coach Mode can role-play the conversation so the change feels supportive, not restrictive.





## TIP EIGHT:

# 8

# Engage in Meaningful Activities

Activities don't need to be complex. What matters is meaning - tasks that connect your loved one to joy, identity, and purpose.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Focus on Ability, Not Disability

Don't assume that because your loved one can't do something exactly as before, they can't participate at all. Break activities down into smaller steps, adapt tools, or focus on the parts they can still enjoy.

### PHILOSOPHY

Dementia can shrink the world, leaving long hours of passivity or isolation. Engagement gives life texture. Familiar activities remind your loved one of who they are, while new but simple ones create fresh moments of joy.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Idleness can lead to agitation or sadness. Purposeful activity reduces anxiety, encourages cooperation, and creates meaningful connection for both caregiver and loved one.



### When to Use It:

Every day. Even for 10–15 minutes at a time.

Think small, frequent doses of joy rather than big, infrequent outings.



#### *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Expecting them to do activities at the same level as before.
- Giving instructions that are too complex or multitasking.
- Assuming “keeping busy” with random chores is enough.



#### *Better Ideas Instead*

- Adapt favorite pastimes: if gardening is too hard, bring it down to small pots or simple sorting tasks.
- Use safe, simple cooking tasks: stirring, peeling, or tasting.
- Turn daily chores into shared activities: folding laundry, setting the table.
- Lean on music, art, or storytelling - activities that spark emotion even when memory fades.

## EXAMPLES

1. Sarah knew her mom loved gardening, but her mom often refused to go into the garden. Sarah understood that confusion was getting in the way, so she brought her into the garden anyway and simplified the tasks. She gave her small pots to water and seeds to sort. Her mom lit up with pride, feeling useful again.
2. A caregiver who loved to cook with his wife started inviting her to stir soup or taste sauces, keeping their kitchen bond alive.
3. Another family built a nightly ritual of playing favorite songs from the 1960s. Even when words were lost, smiles and humming carried the connection.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*It's not about keeping busy — it's about staying connected.  
Meaningful means meaningful to them.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Engagement isn't about productivity; it's about connection.  
Focus on what still brings joy.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can track which activities spark joy in your loved one and remind you to repeat them. If your journal shows music calms evenings, Atenda might prompt: “Play her favorite playlist before dinner.” You can print these activity insights to share with family so everyone knows what works best. And if you feel unsure how to introduce an activity, Atenda’s Coach Mode can role-play with you. You can practice inviting your loved one - “Want to help me water the plants?” - so it feels natural and positive when the moment comes.





## TIP NINE:

# 9

## Educate Yourself & Seek Resources

Knowledge empowers caregivers. The more you learn, the more confident, prepared, and supported you'll feel along the journey.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Keep Learning

Don't assume that what you know today will be enough tomorrow. Dementia changes over time, and new challenges appear at each stage. Staying curious and proactive about education makes you steadier and less likely to feel blindsided.

### PHILOSOPHY

Caregiving is often learned on the fly — but you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Others have walked this path, and their wisdom can save you time, stress, and heartache. Learning from your peers and people who have been through the journey is critical. Their experiences bring reassurance and practical strategies that can't always be found in a handbook. Education is not only about skills; it's about reassurance that what you're facing is common and that you're not alone.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Without resources, caregivers can feel isolated and overwhelmed. With reliable information and supportive communities, you gain confidence, clarity, and peace of mind.



### When to Use It:

From day one, and throughout the caregiving journey.  
Education should be ongoing — not just at moments of crisis.

#### ✘ *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Relying only on random internet searches that may be unreliable.
- Assuming you already “know enough.”
- Isolating yourself and trying to figure everything out alone.

#### ✔ *Better Ideas Instead*

- Make learning a routine: an article, a video, or ask Atenda about a topic each week.
- Join support groups, in person or online, to learn from other caregivers' lived experiences.
- Lean on trusted organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association, for validated info.
- Share what you learn with family so everyone has the same understanding.

## EXAMPLES

1. James joined a local Alzheimer's support group. Hearing others' stories not only gave him practical tips but reassured him that he wasn't alone.
2. A caregiver set a weekly habit of asking Atenda to explain one dementia topic. Over time, she built confidence and felt less reactive and more prepared.
3. A family learned about the importance of routine hydration from a workshop, preventing repeated hospital trips for dehydration.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Knowledge makes you steadier. Educated caregivers are less fearful and more effective.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Education isn't about memorizing facts; it's about building confidence and community. Keep learning, and don't hesitate to ask for help.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can summarize reliable resources, answer questions in plain language, and keep track of topics you've already explored. You can print a weekly "learning log" to share with family, so everyone grows together. If you're not sure how to approach a new situation, Atenda's Coach Mode can role-play with you. For example, you can practice what to say when asking a doctor about new symptoms, or how to explain dementia to younger family members. And if you ever feel guilty that you didn't know something sooner, remember this: no caregiver starts with all the answers. Feeling unprepared at times is normal. The key is to keep learning and using what you learn to improve care moving forward.





## TIP TEN:

# 10

## Prioritize Self Care

You cannot pour from an empty cup. Your well-being directly impacts the quality of care you give.



### OVERRIDING MINDSET: Caring for Yourself *Is* Caring for Them

Self-care isn't selfish. Every break you take, every moment you recharge, makes you more patient, more present, and better equipped to care for your loved one.

### PHILOSOPHY

Caregiving is one of the hardest roles anyone can take on. It can feel endless, demanding, and isolating. Without regular self-care, exhaustion sets in, resentment grows, and mistakes happen. Self-care is not a luxury — it's a survival strategy. And remember: learning to lean on others is part of the journey.

### WHY IT MATTERS

When caregivers ignore their own needs, stress builds and health declines. A tired, burned-out caregiver cannot provide the same level of compassion and steadiness as a supported one. Taking time for yourself actually benefits your loved one.



### When to Use It:

Every day — in small ways. A short walk, a phone call with a friend, a nap, or a quiet cup of tea can make all the difference.

#### ✘ *What Often Doesn't Work*

- Believing you “have to do it all” and refusing help.
- Ignoring your own health and medical appointments.
- Letting guilt stop you from taking breaks.

#### ✔ *Better Ideas Instead*

- Accept help when offered, even if it's not done “your way.”
- Build small daily self-care rituals: a few minutes of journaling, stretching, or sitting outside.
- Schedule regular respite care to recharge, whether through family, friends, or a sitter.
- Stay connected with others. Social ties reduce isolation and renew energy.
- Reach out and support another caregiver. You'll be surprised how much it helps both of you. Sharing the load, swap stories, or simply listen. It'll ease the burden for everyone.

## EXAMPLES

1. Allison finally accepted her neighbor's offer to sit with her dad so she could take a walk. The fresh air cleared her head. She came back calmer, more patient, and better able to care with love.
2. A caregiver who felt isolated began scheduling weekly coffee with a friend. Those conversations gave her perspective and reminded her she was more than just a caregiver.
3. Another family built a rotation schedule among siblings so no one person carried the entire load. Stress eased for everyone, and the parent received better care as a result.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Self-care is not selfish. It is essential. One moment of rest, one breath of relief, makes you stronger for the moments ahead.*



## Tip for Family & Friends

Encourage the caregiver to take breaks. Offer help without waiting to be asked. Even small gestures — running errands, providing a meal, or covering for an hour — can make a huge difference.

## How Atenda Will Help:

Atenda can remind you to schedule breaks and track your stress levels over time. It can generate self-care checklists that fit your life, and you can share them with family so they know how to support you. If you feel guilty for stepping away, Atenda will normalize those feelings and reassure you: it is common to feel this way, but taking care of yourself is part of good caregiving. And if you need help finding words to ask for support, Atenda's Coach Mode can role-play with you. You can practice saying, "Can you sit with Mom for an hour so I can rest?" until it feels natural and comfortable.

