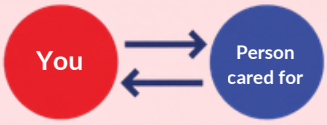
Caring also means caring for yourself

Visual summary of the Self-Care Manual for caregivers of people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases

FUNARP
Fundación de Artritis Reumatoide de Panamá

10 steps, at your own pace



Key idea: looking after yourself sustains the care you give. You don't need to apply every step at once: read the whole manual, pick 1 or 2 steps per week and move forward without demanding instant change. Each step has an action you can start today in under 10 minutes.

Your foundation: steps 1-5

1

Recognize your role and limits

- Honestly name your current situation
- List your care tasks: physical, emotional, administrative
- Caring for yourself doesn't take from the other person: it sustains them

3
weekly care tasks

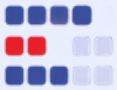
In practice
Write three care tasks you do each week. Naming them makes them visible.

2

Assess your current situation

- Rate 1 to 5: physical health, emotional health, and support network, information, organization and limits Find your lowest area
- The goal is progress, not perfection

Physical
Emotional
Support/limits



example: focus on the lowest

In practice
Record this self-assessment in writing.

3

Organize your sleep and eating

- Set an approximate bedtime
- Eat regularly, not only when you "**have time**"
- If sleep or appetite stay off for weeks, talk to a professional

20 min

In practice
Pick one action this week, e.g. turn screens off 20 minutes before bed.

4

Add brief movement

- Intense exercise isn't required
- Walk, stretch or take stairs: start with 10 minutes a day Stretch during waits (appointments, queues)

10 min

In practice
Set a daily alarm as a "brief movement" reminder.

5

Tend to your emotional health

- Name today's main emotion: tiredness, frustration, guilt, calm
- Take a mindful pause when tension builds
- If distress persists, seek psychological support

2–3 min

In practice
Before bed, jot down in one word how you felt today to spot patterns.

info@funarp.org · +507 6411-0568 · www.funarp.org

This material does not replace care from a health professional.

Connect and sustain your self-care

Steps 6-10, a 4-week route and tracking: Your surroundings: steps 6-10

6 Activate your support network

- List 3 people you could ask for occasional help
- Share at least one task with another relative
- Consider a caregiver support group



In practice
This week, ask one person on your list for one concrete task.

7 Learn about the disease

- Learn thebasics ofyour loved one's rheumatic disease
- Write down questions for the next appointment Use FUNARP's materials, talks and workshops

1
new topic per week

In practice
Pick one topic to research: "what is a flare" or "how their medications work".

8 Organize the practical side

- Use a calendar for appointments, tests and medications Keep a simple log of symptoms or changes
- Look into procedures, permits and available support

1
tool: notebook or app

In practice
Choose onetool and start using it, without seeking the perfect system.

9 Set clear limits

- Define how much time and energy you can give, and say so Reserve time just for you, even weekly
- Limits aren't selfish: they make caregiving sustainable

No
Not right now

In practice
Identify one commitment you can delegate or postpone this week, and do it.

10 Review your warning signs

- Each month, review the caregiver-burnout warning signs
- Several lasting signs: seek professional help without delay
- Adjust your goals without judging yourself for setbacks

1×
a month,fixeddate

In practice
Set afixeddate each month (e.g. the first Sunday) for this review.

4-week route

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Recognize myself and steady my physical base Steps 1–3	Body, emotions and support network Steps 4–6	Information and practical organization Steps 7–8	Limits and progress review Steps 9–10

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
✓	✓	✓		✓		

Tick ✓ each day you complete, even briefly, a self-care action. Don't aim to tick all 7 days from week one.

✅ Quick checklist

- ☐ 1. Recognized my role and limits
- ☐ 2. Assessed my current situation
- ☐ 3. Looked after sleep and eating
- ☐ 4. Added brief movement
- ☐ 5. Tended to my emotional health
- ☐ 6. Activated my support network
- ☐ 7. Learned about the disease
- ☐ 8. Organized the practical side
- ☐ 9. Set clear limits
- ☐ 10. Reviewed my warning signs

💙 When week 4 ends, revisit the checklist to compare how you are now against the start.

Based on EULAR recommendations on self-management and support for people with rheumatic diseases and their caregiving circle, adapted by the FUNARP Education Committee.

info@funarp.org
www.funarp.org