

Finding balance in caregiving

Many caregivers have a hard time finding a healthy balance between caring for others and caring for themselves.

You can test whether your pattern of caring for yourself and others is out of balance by filling out the Unmitigated Communion Scale created by Fritz and Helgeson.

Read each statement carefully before answering. Think about whether you agree or disagree with the statement, and how accurately it describes the way you relate to the people close to you, friends or family.

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (slightly disagree) 3 (neutral) 4 (slightly agree) 5 (strongly agree)

- I place the needs of others above my own.
- I find myself getting overly involved in others' problems.
- For me to be happy, I need others to be happy.
- I worry about how other people get along without me when I am not there.
- I have great difficulty getting to sleep at night when other people are upset.
- It is impossible for me to satisfy my own needs when they interfere with others' needs.
- I cannot say no when someone asks me for help.
- Even when exhausted, I will always help other people.
- I often worry about others' problems.

Once you've finished, calculate your total score and divide it by 9 to get a mean score.

A score of 3 means that your caring is balanced. Anything over or under 3 indicates that your caring priorities require a re-set.

To give you a sense of what is typical, one study of 361 undergraduate students found that the average score for men was 3.05 and the average for women was 3.32.

