

"I no longer have time to do the activities I used to enjoy so much. Yet I can't take a break from caregiving because no one can care for him the way I do."

Take a Break: Take Care of Yourself

Surveys show that many caregivers frequently feel frustrated, anxious, and depressed. They often experience physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach disorders, and sleeplessness.

Helping a dependent adult should not mean giving up your whole life. The well-being of the care receiver may depend on how you feel. If you neglect yourself, you may be less effective in caring for another adult.

Notes: _____

Ways to Manage Caregiver Stress

There are times when caregiver stress cannot be avoided, but it can be managed. Here are some ways to help you maintain your health and well-being.

- Express your feelings to someone. Caregiver support groups are available in many communities. Caregivers can share their feelings and exchange ideas and resources.
- Rid yourself of the mental attitude that you have to do it all.
- Delegate responsibilities to other family members or to service providers in the community.
- Take care of your physical health. Eat balanced meals and exercise regularly.
- Continue the social activities you enjoy.
- Keep involved with groups and hobbies. This is not the time to lose contact with friends and family members.
- Take time for yourself. Schedule time away from your caregiving duties. Don't be caught with a "martyr complex," thinking you are the only person who can be the caregiver.
- Avoid negative ways of coping with stress. Overeating, alcohol, drug misuse, and directing your stress at someone else are destructive ways of dealing with stress problems.

- Encourage the care receiver to be as independent as possible. Work together to solve problems and figure out ways the care receiver can help himself.
- Ask for help. Attempting to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is an impossible task.

Maintaining your energy and vitality as a caregiver is important to you and your family. Exhaustion and burnout can be reduced if you learn to take care of yourself.

List some ways you already manage your stress:

Think of additional ways that you can manage your stress.

For more information, read:

Aging Parents & You by Eugenia Anderson-Ellis, Mastermedia Limited, 1993.

A Survival Guide for Family Caregivers by Jo Horne, CompCare Publishers, 1991.

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Aging Parents – 3rd Edition by Claire Berman, Holt Paperbacks, 2005.

How to Care for Aging Parents – 3rd Edition by Virginia Morris, Workman Publishing Company, 2014.

Taking Care of Aging Family Members by Wendy Lustbader and Nancy Hooyman, The Free Press, 1993.

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This tip sheet is part of a series:

Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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