



Caring for Yourself While Caring for a Loved One

-A resource for patients-

There are many ways to be a family caregiver, such as adult children caring for their parents or older adults caring for their partners. Every type of caregiving has its difficulties. While you care for a loved one as they age, you may have to take on more tasks over time. If you do not have enough support, it can be hard to balance the needs of your loved one with your own needs.

It is normal to have feelings of stress or frustration if you are being asked to do too much. Some family caregivers may also have feelings of guilt when they focus on themselves. But taking care of yourself will allow you to take better care of your loved one. This handout will address caregiver stress and point to community resources that can help.

Caregiver stress can look like:



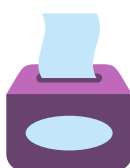
Changes in appetite and/or weight

Loss of interest in activities you enjoy



Changes in how long or how well you sleep

Feeling irritable or hopeless

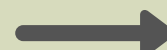


Getting sick more often

Using alcohol or drugs to cope



Turn over to learn more



Remember your own needs as a caregiver

- **Focus on your well-being:** Taking care of your mind and body can help prevent caregiver stress. Try setting small goals each week for healthy meals, regular exercise, and getting a good night's sleep.

Example: I will watch a free online video at home to *practice yoga* for *20 minutes* *5 days next week* while my loved one takes their afternoon nap.

- **Connect with others:** Support from family, friends, and healthcare providers can lower feelings of stress and prevent depression. Remember that it is okay to ask for help when you need it!
- **Do something you enjoy:** Caregiving is not always easy but taking small breaks can help you stay positive. Use this time to work on a hobby or to simply relax.

Explore what is available in your community

Respite care is any type of service that can give a short break to caregivers when someone else is looking after their loved one's needs. A social worker or case manager at your local health center can connect you with available respite services such as senior centers, food banks, or places of worship.

Check with your local Area Agency on Aging about these other possible resources:

- Many **adult day centers** offer scholarships or reduced fees for their services, which include planned activities and meals. Transportation is often provided.
- **Volunteer programs** can provide free companionship to your loved one on a weekly or monthly basis, which can give you some time to focus on yourself.
- If you need outside help to meet your loved one's daily needs, **paid in-home care services** can assist with tasks like bathing, dressing, toileting, and exercising. Talk to your loved one's primary care provider about home care assistance from Medicaid.
- You are not alone in your caregiving experience. Many local organizations offer **support groups** for family caregivers, and some are available online.

Learn more about caregiving: www.ncoa.org/caregivers

Learn more about NCECE: ece.hsdm.harvard.edu

Learn more about health centers: bit.ly/HRSA-Health-Centers

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