

Care for the Caregiver

Easing the Stress and Strain

People like you, who have accepted the role of caregiver, spend anywhere from 6 to 13 hours or more a week taking care of a loved one. Each and every caregiving role is different. Although there may be similarities in the physical, mental and emotional needs of our aging relatives, we must remember that each person is unique and each requires specialized care.



As a caregiver, you will receive tremendous gratification knowing you are meeting the needs of your loved one. There is also the peace of mind in knowing that by being a caregiver you are doing all that you can for the person, perhaps even being able to capture the closeness and tenderness that may not have been shared earlier in life.

Although it may sound simple and very rewarding, caregiving is a tremendous undertaking and can put a strain on you and your family. It is most important that the caregiver take proper care of self. Several ways of keeping the caregiving role in perspective are:

- Think carefully before taking action. Never react to negative attitudes with physical force.
- Take a walk to cool down.
- Take a hot bath to help soothe tensions.
- Listen to soft, familiar music to relax.
- Exercise or do some form of physical activity.

- Meditate to control emotions by deliberately slowing down movements, controlling breathing and thinking of pleasant things.
- Ask for hugs and kisses.
- Talk to someone who can be objective and help you put the situation into perspective.
- Participate in a support group or some other activity outside the home.
- Involve other family members, if possible, in the caregiving role.
- Delegate some of the responsibilities.

As a concerned friend or family member of the caregiver, some things you might offer to do to help ease the stress and strain are:

- Ask how the caregiver is doing? How are they coping? Be sincere in your efforts and be willing to listen to their responses.
- Be understanding and compassionate. Don't try to give advice or fix their lives.
- Get to know them better. Share their feelings. Be genuine.
- Give the caregiver opportunities for leisure time. Stay and watch the care recipient while others go to dinner or a movie.
- Help the caregiver get away from their everyday responsibilities every now and then.
- Provide opportunities for play. Call up the caregiver and invite her to go for a walk.
- Help keep humor in the lives of the caregiver and receiver.



Many caregivers find themselves longing for companionship with others who are going through the same situation. Support groups can be very beneficial to many people. It is a way to receive emotional and social support from others. It is also a way to improve general wellness and personal strength.

Relieve personal stress and strain by seeking and accepting help from family, friends or a support group. This will benefit both the caregiver and the older dependent family member.

Asking for support or help doesn't imply weakness. Sometimes a gentle reminder is

needed so others remember that the caregiver is only human and needs a break. Trying to juggle caregiving, work and family is a large responsibility. Allow others to help.

If you have a friend or family member who is currently in the role of caregiving, take this opportunity to give them a break from the stress and strains often found when providing care.

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