

CAREGIVER STRESS

There are many different kinds of Caregivers. Perhaps you are one, or you are about to become one for your elderly parents, an ill family member or child. It can be a stressful job. Here are some things to keep in mind while you navigate this new journey:

- Provide yourself with a good support system. If other family members can assist, set up times and dates to clarify when you need a break. There are many services available (some listed below) that can further assist with medical needs.
- You may exhibit irritable, anxious and/or detached behavior, at times, towards your loved ones in your care and those around your home. That is normal. This may come in waves, or it may stay for a while. Be patient with yourself and your loved one. Take a deep breath, and take it day-by-day. Don't think too far ahead.
- Rely on your faith in this time. Talk to your religious leaders. Get involved in groups at your churches to create a support network. Prayer, meditation, yoga or simple quiet time can help get you through the day.
- Understand that family and friends not close to the situation may not fully grasp what you are going through. The saying, "You can't understand unless you lived it" is true in this circumstance. Find people who may be in the same situation, and lean on each other. Get out your frustrations. You will find that others are going through the same emotional rollercoaster that you are.
- Take care of yourself physically. Make sure you are eating healthy, balanced meals. Drinking lots of water. Try to refrain from alcohol, as it can lead to becoming more depressed about the situation. Make sure you try to get adequate sleep, even if you take naps during the day. Exercise is your best option to reduce the stress. It is hard to fit in time to do these things, but in the long run you will be better equipped to take on the physical demands of caregiving.
- If Dementia or Alzheimer's is involved, educate your self on signs and symptoms. Know what to expect. Talk to your doctor about a plan and possible medications to help assist them along the way. Do not take what your loved one says during an episode personally. It is normal for them to lash out at their caretaker. The added dimension of a disease can heighten the severity of their angry spells.
- Marital Stress can come from being a caretaker. Continue to communicate with your spouse. Make decisions together. Seek out professional help in the form of Family or Marriage counseling if need be.
- Include your loved one in normal activities, if at all possible. It will help keep some normalcy for all parties involved. Take them to the grocery store, to your child's soccer game, or to the lake on your summer vacation. There are resources out there of trained personnel who can help make this possible.

Above all else, know that depression is high in caregivers. Know when you have to pull away for a break and give yourself alone time. Do not hesitate to reach out to someone you trust during this time.

Here are some resources for Caregivers:

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving>

<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/hospice-and-respite-care.html>

Dementia & Alzheimer's Caregiver Center: <https://www.alz.org/care> 24/7 Hotline: 800.272.3900

CISM Hotline 214-640-4380 SWA/TWU 556