
CAREGIVERS NEED LOVE, TOO!

Take Care Of Yourself While Caring For An Elderly Loved One

The love of a parent caring for a child is so often a selfless love. But, what happens when the roles reverse and the adult child becomes responsible for the well being of their elderly parent? This love is no less selfless. However, it often doesn't feel quite right.

There may be confusion, sadness and helplessness over seeing one's parent (is also their hero) struggle to handle normal activities of daily living. There may also be feelings of guilt because you are "not doing enough". All too often this results in the caregiver burning out from trying to do it all, with little help from anyone else.

Although often difficult, caring for a loved one does not have to be totally overwhelming. To that end we offer the following...



Taking care of yourself can help you care for your loved one with clarity, energy, and without resentment.

SURVIVAL TIPS FOR THE CAREGIVER

Learn all you can - When you discover what to expect and become aware of normal symptoms, you are less likely to become confused, or blame yourself for not preventing the problem.

Recognize your feelings - Right from the start, get used to checking in with your emotions. Deal with feelings of guilt, anger, sadness, etc. before they become unmanageable.

Ask for help - This is often the most difficult thing for a caregiver to do. We think we have to do it all ourselves. Try to remember two things:

- 1) ***You deserve the help.*** You are not an expert in this area, and even experts don't try to do it all by themselves.
- 2) ***People like to help.*** Although they are not always available at the right time, family and friends typically want to be needed. When someone asks "What can I do?" you should be prepared to give them some options.

Note: Think about the help you need ahead of time. You can even make a list and have the helpers choose from the list.

Use professionals - In addition to asking friends and family for help, take advantage of resources that are available to you. Some to consider:

- Social Workers
- Physical Therapists
- Nursing Services
- Occupational Therapists
- Counselors
- Caregiving Services
- Day Care Services
- Community Services

Watch for signs of burnout - If you are not getting enough sleep, food, or time for yourself, you are a candidate for burnout. If you need tranquilizers, alcohol, coffee, or other substances to help you get through the day, you may be on the verge of burnout. If you constantly feel overwhelmed, trapped, or discouraged, you may be in the middle of burnout. Do not ignore these signs. Get help.

Take care of yourself - You may avoid burnout if you take care of your own physical, mental and social needs. Plan for time away from your caregiver responsibilities. Exercise and get plenty of rest. Eat right. (Often, caregivers neglect their own nutrition while looking after that of their loved one).



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