

Caregiver Stress

If you help a loved one with chores such as cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping, setting up medications and going to doctor appointments or even calling just to make sure someone is “ok”, you may be a family caregiver. Family caregivers provide care to a spouse, a neighbor or friend. Others are caring for an adult child or a parent with a disability or illness. You do not need to live with someone to be considered a caregiver. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, 65.7 million Americans served as caregivers for an ill or disabled relative in the past year.

Caregiving can be a very rewarding experience, but it can also be challenging. Caregivers often feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities of caregiving. Feelings of loneliness, isolation, exhaustion, anger and even depression are common. Caregivers are more likely than the general population to have a chronic illness due to conditions of high strain. (82% vs 61% per the American Psychological Association)

Some signs of caregiver stress are:

- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling irritable
- Frequent crying
- Difficulty sleeping
- Lack of interest in activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Increased physical illness

If you are a caregiver, it is important to recognize the warning signs of stress and GET HELP. Getting support can make a substantial difference and make caregiving a matter of “thriving” and not just “surviving.”

Here are some simple things that you can do as a caregiver to take care of yourself:

- Reach out to family and friends for support and accept help when it is offered.
- Maintain your hobbies and your friendships.
- Give yourself a treat at least once per week –no matter how small, as long as it is something that makes you feel special.
- Make a call today to get help. Take advantage of support that is available for caregivers.

There is more support available for caregivers as well. Call the ADRC for more information about these available services:

- **Support groups:** Support groups provide an opportunity to share strategies and coping skills to deal with caregiving challenges. They also provide a chance to build new friendship connections.
- **Workshops:** Powerful Tools for Caregivers is one of several workshops designed to teach self-care and increase caregiving skills.
- **Respite Grants:** The National Family Caregivers Support Program and the Alzheimer’s Family Caregiver Support Program offer financial assistance for respite and other supplemental services to eligible caregivers.
- **Veteran Programs:** Respite and other supplemental services may be available for those who are caring for a veteran who is eligible for those programs.
- **Long Term Care Programs:** Family Care provides funds for services that help caregivers to keep eligible individuals in their homes in the community.
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Make sure that you are a caregiver who “thrives” and not just “survives!”

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