

## Caring for the Caregiver

Caregivers deserve care, too. But finding time for self-care is hard in the constant bustle of a caregiver's life.

Taking time for yourself is not selfish. You can't take good care of your loved one if you are worn out in body or spirit. If stress builds up, people can suffer "caregiver burnout."

### Burnout

Signs that you are suffering caregiver burnout include:

- Your life has no joy.
- You often feel angry, worried, or helpless.
- You get upset over little things.
- You are always tired.
- You have trouble paying attention.
- You get sick more often than usual.
- You eat too much or too little.
- You have trouble sleeping.
- You pull back from friends and family.
- You feel trapped and want to escape.

### How To Reclaim Your Life

- Set aside quiet time every day for yourself.
- Tend to your basic needs: Get a full night's sleep. Eat nourishing meals. Exercise several times a week. These aren't luxuries. They are requirements for good health.
- Rank each day's tasks in importance. Focus on the top tasks first. Accept that you

may not complete the list, but you will finish the most important tasks.

- Learn as much as you can about your loved one's condition. If you understand it well, you'll feel more confident. You may also learn that you are doing things that aren't needed or that the person should do for herself or himself.
- If someone offers help, accept! But don't just say "yes." Give specific ideas.
- Make every day a thanksgiving day. Each day write down in a notebook at least one thing you are thankful for.
- Take up a hobby you once enjoyed. Or, choose a new one.
- Explain to your loved one that you need to take better care of yourself and why. If you say nothing, your loved one may view the changes in your routine as punishment or abandonment.
- Take care of your other relationships—with your spouse, children, friends. Take time to go out to dinner or see a movie.
- Remind yourself often why self-care is vital. Doing so may help you accept the wisdom in others' suggestions that you need to take some time for yourself.
- Live one day at a time. Yesterday is past and can't be changed. There is no way to predict the future.

### Get Help With Caregiving

One reason caregivers burn out is that they believe they alone should provide all care. There's nothing wrong with seeking help with caregiving. Who can provide such help?

- Relatives
- Family friends
- Neighbors
- Members of your church, synagogue, or mosque
- Members of a club you belong to
- Home health agencies, which can provide homemakers, home health aides, and nurses for short-term care
- Adult day care centers
- Nursing homes or assisted-living facilities, some of which accept residents short-term
- For parents of children with diabetes, camp, family weekends, and support groups provide support and respite.

Ask your loved one's doctor, nurse, or social worker for advice on finding respite care (temporary care for your loved one while you take some time off). Check the "Social Service Organizations" listing in your Yellow Pages to see what organizations your town has.



Cure • Care • Commitment<sup>SM</sup>