

5 Tips to Avoid Caregiver Burnout

Caring for an older adult or a family member with a long-term illness can be very rewarding. It is also hard work. It can cause people to feel run down, depressed and even sick. Here are 5 things you can do to prevent burnout.

1. Learn about the condition or illness.

Learn as much as you can about the person's condition, and how it could change over time.

- ✓ Knowing what to expect can lower your stress.
- ✓ It will help you plan for future medical costs and needs. It may give you time to learn skills you will need later on.
- ✓ Some health problems may cause your loved one to act out, say hurtful things or not even remember who you are. Knowing about the illness can help you understand when this is a symptom.

2. Ask for help.

Feel good about the hard work that you do. But remember that you can't do it all. You will need help from others.

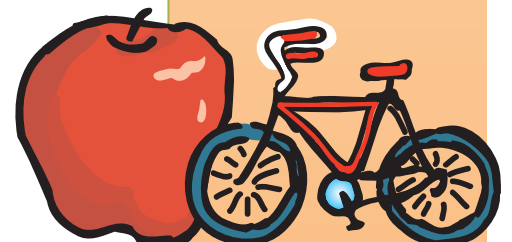
- ✓ Make a list of tasks you would like help with and people you can call.
- ✓ Ask a neighbor to pick up some items at the store each week. Ask family members to help with housekeeping chores, paperwork or research.
- ✓ Contact your local Area Agency on Aging to find volunteer groups in your area. Many groups help with meal delivery, transportation and respite care.



3. Take breaks.

Find some time each day when you can safely step away from your work. For example, take a break when the person you are caring for is with a visitor. You may want to:

- Go outside for a walk or to relax in the garden. Go for a swim or bike ride.
- Read a book or listen to music.
- Chat with a friend.
- Use respite care or an adult day center or senior center for longer breaks at least once a week.



4. Take care of your health too!

To give the best care to your loved one, you need to stay in good health.

- ✓ Get regular health and dental checkups. Ask about getting a flu shot and any health screenings you may need.
- ✓ As much as possible, keep regular sleeping patterns for yourself and the person you are caring for.
- ✓ Eat healthy meals and snacks. Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.
- ✓ Daily physical activity can lower stress, increase your energy and help keep your heart healthy.
- ✓ Your mental health is important too. Join a local or online support group. Talk to your family and friends or to a counselor.



5. Stay positive.

Be realistic about what you can and can't do. It will help you keep a positive attitude.

- ✓ There are many things that you can't control, but you can take charge of your own feelings.
- ✓ A positive attitude may help you give your loved one the best care possible.
- ✓ You may not be able to make the person you are caring for well, but you can offer dignity and do your best to help them feel safe and loved.
- ✓ Even if your loved one is not able to show happiness or appreciation, you can feel good about the job you are doing.



To find information about support groups and services in your area, consult your local phone book or search online. You can also call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116, or visit its website at www.eldercare.gov on the Internet.



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