

Taking Care of the Caregiver



By
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Having an ill loved one is hard. Being his/her caregiver is even harder. When you are the person who is responsible for the day-to-day care of an ill loved one, while also trying to manage the emotional consequences of seeing that loved one ill, while also dealing with the already existing family stresses and dynamics, it is very easy

to get burned out and feel that there is nobody there to care for you.

When I work with caregivers, one of the biggest problems I encounter is getting them to take care of themselves both physically and emotionally. It is SO stressful to be a caregiver, yet so few caregivers change their habits to account for this significant increase in stress.

Caregivers are often so focused on providing care that they neglect their own needs.

One of the most important things a caregiver can do is to recruit help. No one person should carry the caregiving burden alone. Friends and family will offer help in a general way, but the caregiver must learn to accept help, assign

certain tasks to those helpers, and ask for help when needed.

There are certain online programs designed to do this, including www.lotsahelpinghands.com. These sites help caregivers organize helpers and send out requests for specific times/tasks/chores to be done. There are also both online and in-person support groups for caregivers that can be very helpful. Making the time to get the support you need will help you to be a better caregiver and will keep you healthier in the process.

We all need help sometimes. Asking for help when life is at its most stressful is a sign of strength, not weakness. Reach out, set good limits, and accept the loving kindness of others who

want to help you. If you are not coping well or have an increase in depression or anxiety, seek out a mental health professional who has experience with issues related to caregivers.

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health, women with cancer, grief and bereavement, relationships, and stress management. She is on staff at Doylestown Hospital and on the Board of Directors of The Cancer Support Community of Greater Philadelphia. She is also on the medical advisory board of the research database of the Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians.

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