

# Support for caregivers is helpful

Using a network of community support can help caregivers manage stress.

**A**t some point in a son or daughter's life, the role of caregiver may shift. Where parents once took care of their children, aging parents very frequently rely on their children to care for them.

Adult caregivers typically want to do right by their aging loved ones but sometimes find that the demands of medical and emotional support can dominate their lives — so much so that their own children and other household responsibilities are neglected. The Mayo Clinic says it is natural to feel sad, alone, frustrated, and even angry when serving as a caregiver to an elderly parent. However, it's also important to recognize the signs that the burden has become too much and to look for ways to lighten the workload.

Anyone can get caregiver stress, but the National Alliance for Caregiving says women are more susceptible than men. Those who are responsible for helping someone with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or a debilitating illness are also at a high risk of developing their own medical issues. These responsibilities can affect the quality of caregivers' sleep and impede their ability to relax and unwind.

Finding relief from caregiver stress can involve a few different strategies.

**Ask for more help.** Don't hesitate to ask for help. If other family members or siblings are unable to pitch in, look into the possibility of hired aides. These professionals can be excellent and trained sources of support who assist with activities of daily living, remind patients to take their medications and assist in coordinating medical checkups.

**Consider watchdog technology.** Smart homes have enabled remote control of many household systems, making it possible to monitor thermostat temperature, water leaks or floods, appliance and light usage, and much more. Video and sound surveillance can offer peace of mind to those who cannot be with their loved ones constantly. Another option is a product called Care Coach. This is a digital



tool that provides medicine reminders, health coaching, automated alerts, and an interactive avatar that can offer psychological and comforting support.

**Explore respite care.** Many rehabilitation and nursing facilities offer short-term respite care for loved ones so that caregivers can take the time to go on vacation or enjoy a day or two without having to check in on an elderly parent. Facilities generally have 24-hour staff to monitor residents, provide meals and provide entertainment. The change of pace can also be stimulating to the senior, and respite care can be a gradual introduction to long-term care.

**Embrace community resources.** Seniors may be eligible for low- or no-cost services like visiting nurses, meal delivery and adult day programs. This network of support can further alleviate caregiver stress.

**Talk it out.** Work with a licensed therapist to find other coping strategies for dealing with the mounting pressure of being a caregiver. Talk therapy and relaxation techniques can help curb stress.

Being a caregiver is a rewarding but demanding responsibility. Utilizing all possible resources can make the job easier.

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