

For Caregivers: Coping Tips



Caregivers often feel they must tend to their loved one's needs full time. But burning yourself out doesn't help anyone. And it can negatively affect your own health. You can't take good care of someone else without taking good care of yourself as well. It's not selfish. It's vital. Take a break. Eat right. Get out and exercise. Most of all, accept that you can't do everything yourself.



Give yourself a break

All of the things you do aren't equally important. Set priorities. That way you won't be busy all the time. Look after your health. Go for a walk each chance you get. Take a long bath. Lift your spirits by having lunch with a friend. Or do nothing for an hour. Just nap or relax.

Join a support group

Consider joining a caregiver support group where you can talk about your situation, or just listen. These groups help you know that you're not alone. They can provide ideas for coping and self-care. They may meet in person or online. In many cities, support groups are offered in languages other than English. Ask your healthcare provider for information on options in your area.

Accept help

Knowing you can count on others can be a relief. Accept help when it's offered. And be willing to ask for help when you need it. Those who care about you really do want to help.

Bereavement and depression

Over time, after a serious health event, stress should slowly lessen. But your life may have changed. This may cause grief, both for you and your loved one. Contact your healthcare provider if either of you shows signs of depression. Treatment, such as professional counseling, medicine, or a combination of both, can help you find hope, even when you think nothing can help. The earlier that treatment is started, the more effective it is. Signs of depression can include:

- Feeling down most of the time
- Feeling guilty or helpless
- Losing pleasure in things you used to enjoy, like reading, exercise, or social events
- Sleeping less or more than normal
- Having a big rise or fall in appetite or weight
- Feeling restless or irritable
- Feeling tired, weak, or low in energy
- Having trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling angry or agitated (this may be the only sign more common in people assigned male at birth)

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