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# Alzheimer's Caregiving: Caring for Yourself

[Español](#)

Millions of people living in the United States take care of a family member or friend with [Alzheimer's disease](#). While caregiving can be rewarding and meaningful, it can also be challenging. Some days you may feel like you don't know what to do. That's why self-care is so important in helping caregivers stay physically and emotionally healthy. On this page, learn about ways to ask for and find help if you're caring for someone with Alzheimer's.



## Ways to take care of yourself

Taking care of yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver. This could mean asking family members and friends to help out, making time to do things you enjoy, using adult day care services, or getting help from a [local home health care agency](#). Taking these actions can bring you some relief. It also may help keep you from becoming ill or [depressed](#).

Here are some ways you can take care of yourself:

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Join a caregiver support group.
- Take breaks each day.
- Spend time with friends.
- Keep up with your hobbies and interests.
- [Eat healthy foods](#).
- [Exercise](#) as often as you can.
- [See your doctor](#) on a regular basis.
- Keep your [health, legal, and financial information](#) up to date.

## Why I Participate in Alzheimer's Research - Will's Story (Full version)



### Getting help from others

It's okay to ask for help and to take time for yourself. However, many caregivers find it hard to ask others for assistance. You may feel that you should be able to do everything yourself, that it's not okay for you to leave the person you're caring for with someone else, or that none of your friends and family would help if you asked. It's important to remember that you're not alone and asking for help is okay.

If you have trouble asking for support, try using some of these tips:

- Ask people to help out in specific ways, like making a meal, visiting the person, or taking the person out for a short time.
- Join a support group in person or online to share advice and understanding with other caregivers.
- Get help from [home health care or adult day care services](#) when you need it.
- Use national and local resources to find out [how to pay](#) for professional help or get respite care services.

Everyone needs help at times. Recognize that the care of a person with Alzheimer's often exceeds what one person can provide on their own. Consider what "Plan B" looks like if your loved one's care needs increase and you need extra support.

To make dividing up caregiving duties easier, use the [Coordinating Caregiving Responsibilities worksheet](#).

### What if something happened to you?

You may worry about what will happen if you are no longer able to care for the person with Alzheimer's. Having a plan ready in case that happens can be helpful for you and the person with Alzheimer's. Learn more about [advance care planning](#) and consider taking the following steps:

- Consult with family and close friends to decide who would take responsibility for the person with Alzheimer's.
- Maintain a notebook for the person who will assume caregiving responsibilities. This notebook should include important information, such as emergency phone numbers, descriptions of behavioral challenges and possible solutions, and favorite activities.
- Seek information about your local public guardian's office, mental health conservator's office, adult protective services, or other case management services. These organizations may have programs to assist the person with Alzheimer's in your absence.
- Learn about [long-term care](#) facilities in your community and

## Your emotional health

Caring for a person with Alzheimer's takes a lot of time and effort. Your job as caregiver can become even harder when the person you're caring for gets angry with you, hurts your feelings, or forgets who you are. Some caregivers feel as though the person is [there physically, but not there mentally](#), which may cause uncertainty and stress. You may feel discouraged, sad, lonely, frustrated, confused, or angry. These feelings are normal.

Here are some things you can say to yourself that might help you feel better:

- I'm doing the best I can.
- What I'm doing would be hard for anyone.
- I'm not perfect, and that's okay.
- I can't control everything that happens.
- Sometimes, I just need to do what works for right now.
- Even when I do everything I can think of, the person with Alzheimer's will still have problem behaviors because of the illness.

- I will enjoy the moments when we can be together in peace.
- I will seek help from professionals if caregiving becomes too much for me.

Some caregivers find that going to a church, temple, or mosque helps them cope with the daily demands placed on them. For others, simply having a sense that larger forces are at work in the world helps them find a sense of balance and peace.



[Share this infographic](#) and help spread the word about caring for yourself while caring for others.

## Getting professional help

Mental health professionals and social workers can help you deal with stress you may be feeling. They can help you understand difficult feelings, such as anger, sadness, or feeling out of control. They can also help you make plans for unexpected or sudden events. Mental health professionals charge by the hour. [Medicare](#), [Medicaid](#), and some private health insurance plans may cover some of these costs. Ask your health insurance provider about which mental health services your plan covers. Then check with your doctor, local family service agencies, and community mental health agencies for referrals to counselors.

## More tips for self-care

Here are other things to keep in mind as you take care of yourself:

- Understand that you may feel sad and hopeless about what's happening to the person you care for.
- Remind yourself why you've chosen to take care of the person with Alzheimer's. Ask yourself if you made this choice out of love, loyalty, a sense of moral or religious duty, or a desire to help family.
- Let yourself feel day-to-day "uplifts." These might include good feelings about the person you care for, support from other caring people, or time to spend on your own interests and hobbies.
- Experiment with relaxation techniques such as meditation, tai chi, or yoga. Download a smartphone app with guided meditations or relaxing music. Many of these apps are free.
- Find a connection to something "higher than yourself." This may be a belief in a higher power or religious faith or believing that something good comes from every life experience.
- Take advantage of online [resources](#) and [training for family caregivers](#).

## Clinical trials for Alzheimer's caregivers

Researchers are testing strategies to reduce stress and improve overall well-being for Alzheimer's caregivers. By participating in a clinical trial, you can help future generations of Alzheimer's

caregivers and get access to the latest approaches to reduce caregiver burden.

Find a Clinical Trial Near You

### You may also be interested in

- Finding [resources for help with Alzheimer's caregiving](#)
- Downloading [worksheets to help you keep track of caregiving responsibilities](#)
- Learning about [how to split up caregiving tasks](#)

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### For more information

#### NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

[adear@nia.nih.gov](mailto:adear@nia.nih.gov)

[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers)

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

#### Alzheimers.gov

[www.alzheimers.gov](http://www.alzheimers.gov)

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

#### Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

[eldercarelocator@USAgings.org](mailto:eldercarelocator@USAgings.org)

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

**Alzheimer's Association**

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

[info@alz.org](mailto:info@alz.org)

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

**Alzheimer's Foundation of America**

866-232-8484

[info@alzfdn.org](mailto:info@alzfdn.org)

<https://alzfdn.org>

**Family Caregiver Alliance**

800-445-8106

[info@caregiver.org](mailto:info@caregiver.org)

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

**National Respite Locator Service**

[www.archrespice.org/respitelocator](http://www.archrespice.org/respitelocator)

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