

“At night I ask myself, will I be able to do this? What if he falls? Will I be able to help him up? I wonder if I am paying all of the bills. Sometimes I am afraid that I will get so angry I will hurt him.”

Facing Fear

Fear is a normal emotion for caregivers. It does not always follow the rules of logic, but it is neither good nor bad. The way we handle our feelings of fear is important. Ignored or mismanaged fear can become crippling so that caregivers may become unable to cope with their responsibilities in a positive manner.

Caregivers often experience fear as the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver changes.

Caregivers may fear:

- Being alone. They may fear that others will abandon them and they will be left alone.
- Expressing strong emotions. Outbursts and mismanaged emotions may bring additional stress on the caregiver and care receiver.
- Losing control over their own lives. Caregivers are juggling additional demands on time, energy, and finances.
- The future. Caregivers may be uncertain about the effects of the disease on the care receiver, as well as what sort of care the care receiver will require.
- Death. Caregivers examine their own beliefs about death as they face the death of the care receiver.
- Not being able to continue providing care.
- Financial burdens.

Lessen the Effects of Fear

- Know what to expect.
- Learn about the disease and the care required.
- Find out about the caregiving experience.
- Talk to other caregivers.
- Read books and articles, and search the Internet for information.
- Ask health professionals for assistance and information.

Take Action

- Ask yourself, “What am I really afraid of? Why does this frighten me?”
- Break your fear down into manageable components. It is easier to manage specific concerns than general ones.
- Continue this process until your fears seem manageable.
- Consider each component.
- Decide what you can do and act on it.

My specific fears are:

I need more information about:

I will lessen my fears by taking these steps:

Notes:

For more information, read:

A Survival Guide for Family Caregivers by Jo Horne, CompCare Publications, 1991.

Keys to Survival for Caregivers by Mary K. Kouri, Barron's, 1992

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Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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