

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF While You're Caring For Others

There are 34 million people in the US that provide care for someone over the age of 50. Their population is greatly diverse representing all genders, races, cultures, and ages. Caregiving is a rewarding experience for most, but also has challenges and burdens that cause great amounts of stress.

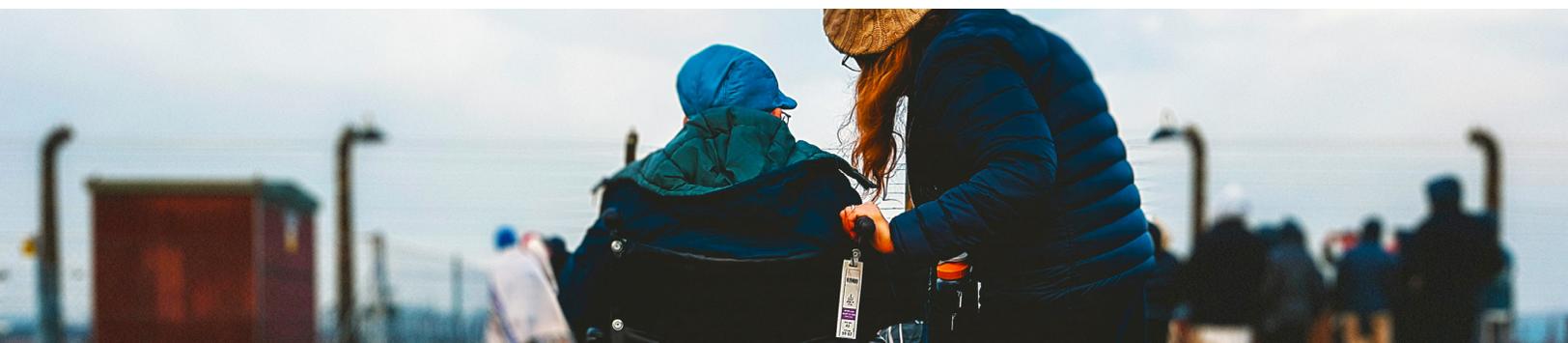
There are ways to prevent and manage caregiver stress by practicing methods of self-care.

- **Practice relaxation techniques** – deep breathing, meditation, music, etc.
- **Express feelings** by talking with someone.
- Set **realistic expectations** about what the caregiver and care receiver can do.
- **Educate yourself** on the care receiver's condition and skills needed to assist.
- **Take care of your own physical needs** – good sleep, meals and exercise.
- **Accept help from others** and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- **Get respite care and take breaks.**
- **Practice good communication and optimism.**

Caregiver stress needs to be managed or caregivers will experience burnout, which is a syndrome of mental, emotional, and physical depletion. Burnout interferes with a caregiver's ability to function and is the leading cause of nursing home placement of the care receivers.



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Strategy becomes even more important when there are additional stresses, such as an emergency or quarantine. Check out these tips for caregivers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Stock up on prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, and medical supplies that relate to care receiver's condition and treatments; nonperishable food items to last for a long stay at home; and other general supplies.



Revisit emergency contingency plans and touch base with family and friends that can help with certain activities, such as grocery shopping and transportation.



Cancel any non-essential medical appointments and attend essential appointments by phone or video-based system if available.



Practice proper hygiene, such as hand-washing and disinfecting surfaces.



Spend quality time with the care receiver and your family. Be present with the people and things you enjoy.



If care receivers are considered vulnerable and are quarantined, caregivers need to use appropriate precautions when they return from out in the community. A population identified as vulnerable should try to stay home as much as possible and if someone brings food and supplies, have them leave it at the door. Online orders can be made and delivered to the door as well.

References:

U of I Extension Caregiving Resources page:

<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/caregiving-resources>

AARP Caregiving Tools:

<http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/caregiving-tools/>

Illinois Department on Aging Caregiver Support:

https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/CommunityServices/caregiver/Pages/caregiver_links.aspx

National Institute on Aging Caregiving page:

https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/featured/caregiving?utm_source=201601107_caregivermonth&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=ealert

Eldercare Locator

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

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