

Dealing with Caregiver Stress in a COVID-19 World

There have always been both joys and pressures in caring for family members. In a world with COVID-19, some of the pressures can be magnified, particularly by social isolation, limits on available support, separation from family or loved ones.

Signs of Caregiver Stress

It's common for caregivers to focus so much on the person they are caring for that they neglect their own needs. You are likely to be experiencing caregiver stress if you:

- Feel overwhelmed
- Worry constantly
- Have trouble sleeping or find yourself sleeping too much
- Have gained or lost weight without intending to
- Are easily irritated or angry
- Have lost interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Often feel sad
- Have frequent headaches, muscle or back pain, or stomach problems
- Are drinking too much or abusing drugs or prescription medications

How to Care for Yourself as a Caregiver

Here are some ways to take care of yourself as a caregiver.

Take care of your health.

- Eat a healthy diet, and keep regular mealtimes.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water.
- Get some physical activity every day. If you can get outside, fresh air and sunshine are good for your health and mood.
- Adopt healthy sleep habits. Stay on a regular sleep schedule.
- Avoid excessive alcohol or substance use.

For more tips, log onto the member website at cascadecenters.com

For assistance

Call: 800-433-2320

Text: 503-850-7721

Email: info@cascadecenters.com

Manage your stress.

- Make time to unwind. Take “mini-breaks” throughout the day and longer breaks when you can.
- Connect with people you enjoy and trust. Even if you can't be together in person, talking with someone who listens to and understands you is powerful medicine.
- Don't rely only on social media for human connection.
- Limit your exposure to news and social media that makes you tense or anxious.
- Practice stress-reduction techniques. Try activities, such as deep breathing, meditation, or listening to calming music.
- Go easy on yourself. Caregiving can be a challenge in the best of times, and it can be especially difficult during this pandemic.



Seek Extra Support

- Reach out to family and friends.
- A good conversation when you're feeling overwhelmed can improve your mood.
- Contact your EAP to connect with experts on elder care and stress management who can help you navigate the challenges you are facing. They can direct you to additional resources you may need, from services in your community to support groups or professional counseling.
- If stress, anxiety, or negative thinking are making it difficult to get through the day, make an appointment to talk with a professional.
- Your employee support program can help you find someone to talk with.

Plan for backup care.

- Think about who could step in as your backup. Identify friends, family members, or neighbors who could take over the care of your older relative should you need it. Think about how you could quarantine safely if you became sick.
- Write out a care plan, and share it with your backup.
- Identify other helpers. You might enlist others to lighten the load for your backup by dropping off groceries or prepared meals, filling prescriptions, or spending time with your relative by video chat.



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