

SELF-CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

It is very important as a caregiver to not only take good care of your loved one, but also to **take good care of yourself**. Here are some helpful hints on how you as a caregiver can maintain a positive attitude, keep yourself physically and emotionally healthy, and “keep your cool” in the midst of the difficulties and challenges of caregiving.

Simple Things That You Can Do For Yourself

- **Celebrate** small successes and good days.
- Maintain meaningful **relationships** with family and friends.
- Make **realistic** commitments - adjust priorities to match time, energy, and motivation.
- Take **time off** to restore yourself (stretch, take a walk, read a book, practice a hobby, etc.).
- Identify **positive** things in your life – list your accomplishments as a caregiver and allow yourself to feel good about the role you play in your loved one’s life.
- Get enough **sleep**. If you’re rested, you will be more patient and efficient in caregiving.
- Remain **flexible** and keep the capacity to alter your perspective as changes occur.
- Keep your **sense of humor** -- use it often.

Seek Outside Information & Assistance

- **Educate** yourself regarding your loved one’s condition and needed care.
- Don’t feel guilty about **asking others for help**. Ask for and accept help. Remember that you need to get away at times, so delegate roles to others and keep other family members involved.
- Join a **caregiver support group**. This will give you a safe place to vent your feelings and frustration, as well as get valuable advice from other caregivers.
- Seek **advice** from health care providers, social workers and counselors regarding community resources and personal care.
- Check out **resources** for day care, respite, and other community resources before they may be needed, and keep this information close by.

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This Fact Sheet is provided as a public service of the Caregiver Resource Network. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of Kent County organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American’s Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support Funds. Revised 2/18/03

www.CaregiverResource.net or call 616-456-5664



Are YOU caring for a parent, spouse or sick relative? You ARE a caregiver... and a wife, husband, parent, child, friend, employee...

TEN WARNING SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS*

Denial about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed.

Anger at the person receiving care, or others – that no effective treatments or cures currently exist; and that people don't understand what's going on.

Social withdrawal from friends and activities that once brought pleasure.

Anxiety about facing another day and what the future holds.

Depression affecting ability to cope.

Exhaustion making it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks.

Sleeplessness caused by never-ending lists of concerns.

Irritability leading to moodiness and triggering negative responses and reactions.

Lack of concentration making it difficult to perform familiar tasks.

Health problems that take their toll, both mentally and physically.

**Provided with permission from the Alzheimer's Association West Michigan Chapter, 1-800-893-8365.*

For information or assistance in Kent County contact the Caregiver Resource Network:

Area Agency on Aging of
Western Michigan
(616) 456-5664

Gerontology Network
(616) 456-6135

HHS, Health Options
(616) 956-9440

Senior Neighbors, Inc.
(616) 459-6019

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