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# Caregiving: *Maintaining Your Health*

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# Welcome

- ❖ Caregivers can have mixed responses to their role
  - ❑ Deep personal satisfaction
  - ❑ Risk of physical, emotional, and financial strain
- ❖ This educational slide show was developed to provide caregivers with information and resources to stay well.



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# Caregiving: What Is It?

- ❖ Caregivers provide help to a person in need on a regular basis. This help could be short or long term in duration.
- ❖ Basic daily tasks that might be part of a caregiver's daily routine include:
  - ✓ Transportation
  - ✓ Bathing
  - ✓ Paying bills
  - ✓ Cooking
  - ✓ Helping with medication
  - ✓ Housecleaning



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# Caregiving: Who Does It?

- **Formal Caregivers** – These are individuals paid to provide basic daily living support to persons in need.
  - Examples of this are a home health aide or housekeeper
- **Informal Caregivers** – These are individuals that are not paid. In many cases, these are also called family members.
  - Examples include a friend helping a friend or a daughter helping a parent



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# Caregiver Rights

It is important to remember that caregiving is a choice and commitment. Here are some basic rights that can support a caregiver's health and wellness:

- 1) I have the **right to take care of myself**
- 2) I have the **right to say “no”** without feeling guilty
- 3) I have the **right to ask for help**
- 4) I have the **right to express how I feel**



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# Caregiving: A Growing Need

## The Need for Caregivers is Growing

- ✓ The United States has a growing population of older adults
- ✓ Advances in technology and healthcare have led to people living longer
- ✓ Physical frailty and chronic health conditions develop as people age

**All these facts are increasing the numbers of people needed to help others**



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# Planning for Caregiving

- Although some people plan on being a caregiver, there are many who are unexpectedly thrust into the situation.
- Examples of sudden caregiving roles include:
  - ✓ **A sudden illness** like Pneumonia, might require a person to temporarily need assistance.
  - ✓ **Worsening of a chronic health problem**, such as Parkinson's Disease, may cause a person to need more help.



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# Caregiving: Getting Started

Get started by asking yourself (and answering) the following questions:

- ❖ Am I healthy enough to be a caregiver?
- ❖ Am I able to help someone on a short term or long term basis?
- ❖ Do I need to take time off from paid employment?
- ❖ How might my helping someone else affect my family or loved ones?
- ❖ Do I need more information about the type of help needed before I can make a decision?
- ❖ Will I need help to provide care for someone else? If so, what are my resources?



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# Caregiving: Planning

- ❖ Once you have determined being a caregiver is the right fit for you, getting organized is essential.
- ❖ Learn as much about the health condition that is causing the person you care for to need help:
  - ✓ Is it a short-term or long-term health issue?
  - ✓ Will the person improve or worsen in their ability for self care?
  - ✓ What specific daily living tasks does the person need help with (some examples are bathing, dressing, laundry, cooking, eating, walking/moving, medications)
  - ✓ What can you expect to see with this health issue? (for example, memory loss or walking problems)



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# Caregiving: Planning

- ✓ Find out what resources are available to provide help to you
  - ❑ Is there insurance coverage for home healthcare (Medicare, Medicaid, Long Term Care Insurance)? If so, for how long?
  - ❑ Are there family members or friends that could pitch in to help as needed? If so, make a list with contact information.
  - ❑ Does the person being cared for have financial resources to hire formal caregiver help if needed?
  - ❑ Are there caregiving services such as transportation, home meal delivery, non-medical home care services (such as housekeeping), home modification programs or legal and financial counseling?
  - ❑ Is there an advance healthcare directives in place? Is someone designated to make healthcare/financial decisions if needed?
  - ❑ Is there a mortuary trust or plan in place for a funeral service?



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# Caregiving: Planning

## ✓ Stay Realistic – Develop a Plan to Support Your Health and Wellness

- Do you need to discuss the caregiving role with your supervisor? Discussing flexible work schedules and alerting your work supervisor of the caregiving need can alleviate stress.
- Do you need to consider taking time off from your paid employment? Discussing this with your family and considering the financial impact is critical.
- Plan a caregiving schedule that allows you to get rest, have a break, eat regularly, and get some exercise.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about your caregiver role. Ask if you may be at increased risk for health problems.



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# Caregiving for Older Adults

Here are tips to be more effective providing help to older adults:

- ✓ Know the individuals routine – this will allow you to anticipate needs
- ✓ Allow additional time for older adults to move or change position
- ✓ Allow additional time for older adults to process and learn new information – slow down how quickly you speak
- ✓ Encourage the older adult you care for to do as much for themselves as they can – avoid the danger of “I’ll just do it myself because it is quicker”



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# Weighing The Risks & Benefits

## Caregiver Benefits To Consider

- ✓ Sense of Deep Personal Satisfaction of Helping Another
- ✓ Sense of Fulfilling Purpose in Life
- ✓ Adopting a Positive Attitude about Caregiving Role has Positive Health Benefits
- ✓ Increased Meaningful Communication with Older Adult You Care For

## Caregiver Risks To Consider

- ✓ Stress from emotional and/or physical strain of caregiving
- ✓ Exhaustion
- ✓ Depressed mood
- ✓ Feeling anxious
- ✓ Increased risk of long-term medical problems such as heart disease.
- ✓ Not getting enough physical activity
- ✓ Becoming isolated and lonely
- ✓ Feelings of guilt are common



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# Caregiver Self Assessment

Caregivers are often so concerned with caring for the needs of those they are helping that they lose sight of their own well-being. If you are assisting someone on a regular basis with a chronic health condition, please take just a moment to answer the following. **If you answered “yes” to any of these, talk with your healthcare provider.**

## Have you often...

- Felt that you couldn't leave the person you care for alone..... Yes  No
- Felt completely overwhelmed with the responsibilities you have Yes  No
- Felt a loss of privacy and/or personal time due to your caregiving responsibilities..... Yes  No
- Been edgy or irritable..... Yes  No
- Had sleep disturbed because of your caregiving responsibilities Yes  No
- Had crying spells..... Yes  No
- Felt strained between work and family responsibilities..... Yes  No
- Had health problems that are taking a toll on you mentally or physically..... Yes  No



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# Getting the Facts on Caregiving Risks

**Physical Health** – Caregivers have higher risks of chronic health problems such as heart disease, depression, and obesity.

**Emotional/Mental Health** – Caregivers have increased symptoms of feeling anxious or sad. Feelings of hopelessness or being overwhelmed are also common.

**Social Health** – Caregivers can become isolated and have less time for meaningful social interactions with family, friends, or engaging in hobbies.

**Spiritual Health** - Caregivers can feel guilt if they wish their caregiving responsibilities would end. Feelings of anger towards their higher power can develop.



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# Tips To Stay Well – What You Can Do

## Physical Health

- Get a Good Night's **Sleep**
- Make **Exercise** a Priority – it frequently is the first thing a caregiver cuts out of daily life
- **Eat** healthy foods – consider taking a vitamin supplement
- Get **Regular Health Check-Ups** with your primary care provider
- Have a yearly **Flu Shot**



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# Tips To Stay Well – What You Can Do

## Mental Health

- Find someone you can **Talk With Regularly** about how you feel – friend, family member, counselor
- **Take a Break** – An hour, an evening, or a few days
- **Ask For And Accept Help** – Reach out when you are feeling stressed, sad, or overwhelmed
- Say **No** when you are asked to do tasks that add to your stress
- **Forgive Yourself** – No one is perfect. All caregivers feel frustrated or resentful at times



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# Tips To Stay Well – What You Can Do

## Social Health

- **Stay in touch** with family and friends – plan to connect by phone, Skype, or a cup of coffee at least once a week
- Make time to do **something you enjoy** regularly – a hobby or other activity that gives you pleasure. Laughter is a wonderful activity to do with family and friends.
- Consider **planning an outing or short trip** with a friend or relative at least once a month
- **Take charge of your life** – making active decisions in your best interest is not selfish



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# Tips To Stay Well – What You Can Do

## Spiritual Health

- **Stay engaged** with your faith community
- **Meditation and prayer** are comforting and re-charging wellness strategies. They also promote relaxation.



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# Balancing Work & Family

- Many caregivers today are in the **“Sandwich Generation”**
  - **Defined as:** Middle-aged adults with life partners, children at home, working, and providing help to an older family member.
- **The risk of stress is high** for caregivers who are balancing work and family.
  - Health, relationship, and financial issues can develop



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# Balancing Work & Family

Important Tips to Stay Well Include:

- ✓ **Talk with your Supervisor** about your situation
- ✓ Explore if **Family Medical Leave** is an option for you
- ✓ Save **break or lunch times to check in** on those you care for
- ✓ **Talk openly with and listen to** your family members – discuss your concerns and emotions together
- ✓ **Talk openly with your children** about your caregiving role – give them permission to tell you how they feel
- ✓ Try to **maintain a routine** at home
- ✓ **Be realistic** – don't attempt to do everything yourself
- ✓ **Be specific** with what help is needed and **ask for help**



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# Know Your Resources

- **Community resources** that may assist you with caregiving help or information include:

- ✓ Meals on Wheels or meal site programs
- ✓ Caregiver training classes
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Friendly visitors and respite care so you can have a break
- ✓ Homecare
- ✓ Adult day services
- ✓ Elder law attorneys or legal services for the elderly
- ✓ Support groups – general caregiver or groups that focus on a specific chronic health condition like Alzheimer's Disease
- ✓ Care coordination/navigation services



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# For More Information on Caregiving

- Your local **Area Agency on Aging** is a clearinghouse of information on caregiving , community resources, financial assistance and health insurance options for older adults and their families.  
1-800-677-1116, [www.eldercare.org](http://www.eldercare.org)
- For **Caregiver Education and Resource** Information
  - ✓ Family Caregiver Alliance: 1-800-445-8106, [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)
  - ✓ National Family Caregivers Alliance: 1-800-896-3650, [www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org)
  - ✓ The National Respite Locator Service: 1-919-490-5577, [www.respitlocator.org](http://www.respitlocator.org)
  - ✓ National Alliance for Caregiving: [www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org)
  - ✓ Administration on Aging: 1-800-677-1116, [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)
  - ✓ Care Navigation Services: [www.seniorcarecoordination.net](http://www.seniorcarecoordination.net)
  - ✓ 2-1-1 : [www.211.org](http://www.211.org) or dial 211



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# One Final Caregiver Tip....

One of the most important things for you to remember on your caregiving journey is:

***You can't take care of anyone else unless you TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.***



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