

## The Cost of Caregiving: How to Avoid Sacrificing Your Own Well-Being

According to [a 2016 report](#) from the Population Reference Bureau, the number of Americans age 65 and older is projected to more than double from 46 million to over 98 million by 2060.

This spike means that an increasing percentage of the population will likely provide care for aging relatives in the coming years. While it's an unavoidable reality for many, few are properly prepared for or aware of the toll caregiving can have on their own health. Here are a few ways you can manage the stress of caregiving.

### Who Are Caregivers?

Many people think of caregivers as people who work in assisted living communities or the medical field; however, this is an extremely limited definition. The reality is, anyone who provides help to a person in need is a caregiver. This can include caring for an ill spouse or partner, a disabled family member or an aging relative, but surprisingly few family caregivers identify themselves as a "caregiver."

### What Caregivers Give

Even if you love caring for other people, there are [many ways](#) this can drain and damage your overall well-being.

#### *Time*

Caregivers spend an average of over 20 hours per week tending to their caregiving duties according to [a 2015 study](#) from the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. It may not sound like much, but 20 hours is a huge time commitment. For comparison, on a typical day in 2017, working people spent an average of [40 hours a week at work](#). Essentially, adding 20 hours of caregiving time is like working both a full-time job and a part-time job.

#### *Finances*

Unless you work in an assisted living community or for an at-home care company, you likely aren't being paid for your time and effort. Many family caregivers also use their own money to help others by paying for:

- Medication
- Groceries
- Transportation

#### *Attention*

While nearly one-sixth of American caregivers also work outside the home, their focus and attention can suffer while on the job. Their minds may wander to their loved one's needs, disengaging them from their work. This can have a negative impact on a person's job performance.

## Signs of Caregiver Stress

Many caregivers become so focused on the needs of the person they care for that they neglect to notice when their own well-being is suffering. These are a few common signs of caregiver stress:

- Frequent headaches or bodily pain
- Sadness or depression
- Becoming easily irritated or angry
- Fluctuating weight
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Feeling overwhelmed or worried

## Tactics to Manage Caregiver Stress

### *Reduce Personal Stress*

Personal stress is determined by many factors, including your relationship with the person you're caring for and your coping abilities. Recognize your warning signs early and identify aspects of your situation that you can and cannot change. Take steps to reduce your stress by taking a walk, meditating or doing any activity that calms you.

### *Set Realistic Goals*

Setting specific goals and breaking them into manageable steps will give you an action plan rather than a generalized goal that will be impossible to achieve.

### *Communicate Constructively*

Communication is a crucial part of caregiving and an important tool. Clear, assertive conversations will help you get the support and answers you need. A few communication guidelines to follow include:

- Using "I" phrases rather than accusatory "you" statements.
- Respecting the rights and feelings of others.
- Being direct about your feelings and needs by speaking to the person.
- Actively listening to what the other person is saying.

### *Accept Help*

Some people find asking for and accepting help difficult because they perceive it as a sign of weakness when really, reaching out is a sign of personal strength. Accepting help will lessen your workload, decrease your stress levels and improve your overall well-being.

### *Talk to Your Doctor*

Health care is a common service provided by caregivers, but all too often, it leads to them neglecting their own health. Make a doctor's appointment and arrive with prepared questions so you don't forget anything. Having your needs met will give you the strength and freedom to care for others.

### Assisted Living in Naples, FL

There may come a time when you are unable to serve as your loved one's primary caregiver. If that day comes, Beach House Assisted Living & Memory Care in Naples, Florida will be here for you. At Beach House, we are committed to providing exceptional care in an upscale community. You can rest easy knowing your loved one will be supported by our friendly caregivers and have access to our personalized services and activities.

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