

SELF-CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregivers provide assistance for another person's social or health needs. Caregiving may include help with one or more activities important for daily living such as bathing and dressing, paying bills, shopping, and providing transportation. It also may involve emotional support, or help with managing a chronic disease or disability. Caregiving responsibilities can increase and change as the recipient's needs increase, which may result in additional strain on the caregiver.³



In 2014, 14.5% (46.3 million) of the US population was aged 65 or older. This number is projected to reach 23.5% (98 million) by 2060.¹



Aging adults experience higher risk of chronic disease. In 2012, 60% of older adults managed two or more chronic conditions.¹



Approximately 25% of U.S. adults 18 years of age and older reported providing care or assistance to a person with a long-term illness or disability in the past 30 days.¹



Caregivers are at increased risk for negative health consequences, including stress and depression, and need increased support to preserve their own health. These risks are greater for caregivers of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias.¹



In 2016, 64 million Americans (1 in 5) lived in multi-generational households.²

Caregiving Tips

Here are some self-care tips to practice so you can be more present in your caregiving role:

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

- » Learn what benefits your employer offers to help you care for yourself and/or your loved ones.
- » Develop a backup care plan to have in place in case you are unavailable for any reason. Family, friends, a calling tree, and part-time day care or adult care are all examples of backup care options.
- » As a caregiver, there are support resources available to you. Learn more here: <https://www.usa.gov/disability-caregiver#item-36997>
- » Establish open communication with all of the care recipient's providers - including medical (general practitioner and specialty areas), pharmacy, mental health, palliative care, etc.
 - This will help you navigate the health care system, get information on financial aid, grants, as well as receive support during a crisis.
 - This will also help the care recipient get the best care possible by having all of their providers communicating with each other.
- » Work flexibility and support goes a long way!
 - Speak with your manager and/or HR business partner about your situation to gain support.
 - Use FMLA if needed: <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla>
 - Take a short-term leave of absence if needed.

MANAGE STRESS

- » Take time for yourself - doing so will mitigate burnout and make you more valuable as a caregiver!
- » Learn when to ask for help. Caregiver support lines can be an excellent resource.
- » Make sure you have a support system and/or join a support group.
 - Watching someone suffer, lose functions, and/or pass away is very difficult - talk about your struggles, fears and feelings.
- » Seek counseling if needed - this may include your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or mental health benefit through your health plan.

PRACTICE RESILIENCY

- » Learn to accept what you can't change or control.
- » Seek counseling if needed - this may include your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or mental health benefit through your health plan.
- » Gain insight into your emotions (sadness, guilt, anger) and find ways to cope with them so they don't come out in a negative way.

PRACTICE KINDNESS

- » Remember to have fun and take a break - self-care is not selfish!
- » Recognize you are showing up for someone in need; many people don't and/or can't do this, so give yourself a pat on the back because being a caregiver is not easy.
- » Accept that you're not perfect - you'll make mistakes or mishandle the situations along the way.

MANAGE YOUR OVERALL WELLBEING

- » Work off stress by exercising.
- » Avoid "self-medicating" with alcohol or other drugs.
- » Sleep and eat well whenever possible.

SOURCES

1. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/older-adults>
2. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/05/a-record-64-million-americans-live-in-multigenerational-households/>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/caregiver-brief.html>