



# Grandparents Corner

July 2016

## Caregiver Stress and Burnout

The demands of caregiving can be overwhelming, especially if you feel you have little control over the situation or you're in over your head. If the stress of caregiving is left unchecked, it can take a toll on your health, relationships, and state of mind, eventually leading to burnout. When you're burnt out, it's tough to do anything. Taking care of you isn't a luxury—it is necessary. Rein in the stress in our life and regain balance, joy and hope.

### **Caregiver Stress and Burnout: What You Need to Know**

Caring for a loved one can be very rewarding, but it also involves many stressors. Caregiver stress can be particularly damaging, since it is typically a chronic, long-term challenge. You may face years or even decades of caregiving responsibilities. It can be particularly disheartening when there's no hope that your family member will get better.

If you don't have the physical and emotional support you need, the stress of caregiving leaves you vulnerable to a wide range of problems, including depression, anxiety, and burnout. When you get to that point, both you and the person you are caring for suffer. That's why managing the stress levels in your life is just as important as making sure your family member goes to their doctor's appointment or takes their medication on time.

Common signs and symptoms of caregiver stress:

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities

Common signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout:

- You have much less energy than you once had
- It seems like you catch every cold or flu that's going around
- You're constantly exhausted, even after sleeping or taking a break
- You neglect your own needs, either because you're too busy or you don't care anymore
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- You're increasingly impatient and irritable with the person you're caring for
- You feel helpless and hopeless

Source: [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)

*Staying cool in the summer is especially important for older adults. Read the issue and answer the questions below by answering True or False.*

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1. *Alcoholic beverages are the same as water when it comes to preventing dehydration.*  
T F
2. *Older adults have a lower risk of heat-related illnesses than younger people.*  
T F
3. *People feel less thirsty as they age, so older adults should drink more water, especially in hot weather.* T F
4. *Wearing loose clothing helps air to circulate around your skin and allows sweat to evaporate and cool the body.* T F
5. *Air drying dishes is more sanitary than using a dish towel.* T F
6. *If the person in your care experiences any of these symptoms—fatigue, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps and irritability—it may be heat exhaustion.* T F
7. *In heat stroke, the body loses its ability to perspire and cannot cool itself.* T F
8. *For safety, cook hamburgers or chopped meat until the juices run clear.* T F
9. *When it is hot in summer, ice cold liquids are better for you than liquids that are just cool to the touch.* T F
10. *Heat exhaustion can lead to life-threatening heat stroke.* T F

**KEY:** 1. F 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. T 9. F 10. T