

# Caregiver Assistance News

*“Caring for You - Caring for Others”*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,  
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



**DECEMBER 2018**

## **Mental Health - Avoiding Burnout**

Stress occurs as a result of too many pressures that demand too much of you. The stress of caregiving can be overwhelming. If you feel very guilty, resentful, sad and frightened, your stress level will be high. It is natural for caregivers to experience these feelings. When you do not pay attention to your level of stress, you may ask more of yourself than you can give. If this “wear and tear” continues, you may become depressed, ill, isolated, and unable to provide care. Caregivers are frequently told to take care of themselves; they can offer a thousand reasons why they do not have the time, energy, money, etc. to do so.



### **Steps You Can Take**

Think of ways you can incorporate some of the following to comfort yourself: prayer, talking with friends or relatives, exercise, hobbies, meditation, mindful breathing, yoga, walking, and seeking professional help or counseling. It is important to get help and support from other family members. Find a way to get respite from caregiving before you reach the point when you feel your life is out of control—burned out.

### **Burnout: Are You Suffering from It?**

Often, caregivers are not even aware that they are suffering from burnout—until a friend or family member points out that they are not themselves. Caregivers can underestimate the impact of the work they are doing and the time and emotional energy they are using. Try not to be offended, but listen if you are told that you are more irritable than usual.

Burnout may have some of the same symptoms as depression, but is not the same and cannot be helped with medication. Burnout may explain your loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy, your run-down condition, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, even wanting to hurt yourself or the person you are caring for. If you have these feelings, it is time to re-evaluate your caregiving situation. You should take steps to get more support and relief.

### **Where to Find Help**

Are you feeling that you cannot or do not want to continue caregiving, but that you have no choice but to keep going? The following suggestions on Page 2 may be of help.

*(continued on Page 2)*

## Avoiding Burnout...continued from Page 1

- Find someone, a friend or counselor, who can listen and give you new ideas and perspective.
- Attend conferences and lectures about the condition or join a support group with other people who are going through the same thing.
- Hire more help or enlist more family involvement.
- Consider enrolling the person in your care in an adult day care program.
- Consider placing them in a residential care facility for a short stay while you take a vacation.
- Seriously consider whether you want to continue providing hands-on care. Both you and the person in your care may do better if they are placed in a care facility. You then may be able to visit, to keep an eye on the care, and to enjoy being together when you are no longer the front-line person.



### Emotional Burdens

You may think you are the only one to face these problems, but you are not alone. Many caregivers face:

- The need to hide their grief
- Fear of the future
- Worries about money
- Not being able to solve problems

Fears of dependency and loneliness, or isolation, are common in families of those who are ill. The person needing care can become more and more dependent on the one who is providing it. At the same time, the caregiver needs others for respite and support. Many caregivers are ashamed about needing help, so they don't ask for it. Those caregivers who are able to develop personal and social support have a greater sense of well-being.

### Spouse Caregivers

Spouse caregivers have special problems as they gradually lose the emotional support of the partner who is ill and must now be his or her emotional as well as physical support. It is especially important for spouse caregivers to seek out a support system.

## Memory Care

In general, people with memory problems have the best memory for distant events. For instance, it may be easier for the person with memory problems to talk about holidays when they were a child or young adult compared to a more recent holiday.



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Feeling Invisible

“Why doesn’t anyone ask how I am doing?” It is easy to feel invisible, as if no one can see you. Everyone’s attention is on the person with the illness, and they don’t seem to understand what the caregiver is going through. Many caregivers say that nobody even asks how they’re doing. Mental health experts say it’s not wise to let feelings of neglect build up. Caregivers need to speak up and tell other people what they need and how they feel. Support groups, religious or spiritual advisors, or mental health counselors can teach you new and positive ways to express your own need for help.

### NOTE:

*Seek out professional help when you are using alcohol or too many prescription medications than usual to relax, feel intense fear and anxiety, are having thoughts of suicide, and/or have become or are thinking about becoming physically violent toward the person in your care.*

## Gifts That Keep Giving by Preventing Falls

It’s that time again – time to give gifts that show how much you care. But what do you give someone who says they have everything they need? Another pair of gloves? Flowers? More candy? How about giving the older adult you love something that’s really useful? How about a gift that will help them avoid a fall?



The STEADY U Ohio falls prevention initiative suggests:

- Non-skid slippers: Not only are they practical for fall prevention, they also keep feet warm during cold winter nights. Safer than socks, non-skid slippers can help keep an older adult safe and warm.
- Winter boots with rubber soles: Investing in a waterproof pair of winter boots with sturdy, non-slip rubber bottoms can literally be life-saving this winter.
- A sturdy step stool: Look for large platform steps, slip resistant feet, and be sure it has a hand rail for help with balance.
- A cordless telephone: Having a cordless phone means an older adult can keep it nearby and will not have to rush to answer a call.
- Welcome mats or trays to absorb moisture from wet boots: A wet floor is a slippery floor. A tray inside an older adult’s door can contain the mess and prevent a possible fall.
- A promise to shovel snow: Shoveling snow can take a major toll on the body, so giving a loved one the gift of not having to think about it this holiday season is money well-spent.

This year, give a gift that an older adult can not only use, but that will also reduce their risk of a potentially life-changing fall.

View [www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov) to find more tips and resources for falls prevention.



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*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## **Safety Tips - Grief Support Groups**

When a person becomes sick and then dies, caregivers and family members experience the loss of their loved one, but they also experience the loss of the dreams they shared with them. Disease might prevent their loved one from sharing in daily activities and making long-term plans. Living with chronic illness can take the fun out of life. This is a wound that must be acknowledged and dealt with. Being in denial for a long period of time can also cause stress. Expressing your feelings, allowing time for healing, and the support of compassionate friends is the best way to get through the grieving process. Each time we experience a loss and ignore it, things can only get worse. Grief must be recognized and experienced.



Your grieving process will be easier if you meet with others who have had a similar experience. Grief support groups often meet at churches, synagogues, county mental health offices, and hospitals. Many hospice organizations sponsor support groups. Ask your doctor or other health care professional to recommend a group. Eventually, you will find a way to make peace with the pain of loss and move on with your life.