

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!**



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Alzheimer's and Caregiver Burnout

The stress of caregiving a person with Alzheimer's or dementia can be overwhelming when you feel you have too many responsibilities and not enough support. If you feel guilty, resentful, sad and frightened, your stress level will be high. It is natural for caregivers to experience these feelings from time to time. If you develop ways of coping with the demands of caregiving, and are aware of your level of stress, you will know when to seek help, information, or time off. 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 for the person with dementia or yourself. Caregivers are frequently told to take care of themselves. Be aware of your own excuses—whether real or imagined—against taking this advice. 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 for family caregivers 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.

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, seem to be losing your temper with the person you are caring for, and do not appear to be doing well.

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 from the constant responsibility and stress of caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease.

Caregiver Burnout Checklist

Ask yourself the following questions:

Are your expectations realistic? Are you expecting the person with Alzheimer's disease to get better or to always be pleasant because of all the time and concern you put into his/her care?

Do you wish he or she would show gratitude?

When expected help does not come through, do you get disappointed and try to do everything yourself?

Are you feeling tired, isolated, helpless, angry, resentful, or guilty?

Are you physically ill yourself and not going to the doctor or following the doctor's instructions about how to care for yourself?

Have you stopped making time for yourself, to refuel and nourish your own interests and friendships?

Are you using destructive ways of coping, such as alcohol, overeating, or misusing drugs?

Have you caught yourself calling the person in your care bad names?

Do you want to scream at him/her?

Are you afraid you may hurt him/her?

Yes

No

Dependency and Isolation

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.

NOTE:

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.

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. Mental health experts say it's not wise to let feelings of neglect build-up. Seek out professional help when you:

- Are using more alcohol than usual to relax.
- Have physical symptoms such as skin rashes, backaches, or a cold persists.
- Are unable to think clearly or focus.
- Feel keyed up and on edge.
- Feel sad or intense fear and anxiety.
- Are depressed for two weeks or more or are having thoughts of suicide.
- Have become or are thinking about becoming physically violent toward the person you are caring for.



Memory Care - Handwashing

Handwashing is often an issue in dementia. Guide the person in your care to the sink and tell them step-by-step how to wash their hands. Check the flow of water so it is not too strong or too hot. It can be frightening for a person with dementia.



Free Telephone Caregiver Support Group

Thursday, November 18th • 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

If you are interested in this free support, please contact Vicki Woyan at the AAA7 for more details.

Call: 1-800-582-7277, ext. 215 • E-Mail: info@aaa7.org



Safety Tips - Falls Prevention

- Staying in when it is rainy or icy outside.
- Having regular vision screening check-ups for eyeglasses.
- Being cautious when walking on wet floors. Look carefully at floors in public buildings as many are made of highly polished marble or tile that can be slippery.
- Wearing good foot support.
- Having foot pain problems corrected and toenails trimmed.
- Stop at curbs and check the height before stepping up or down. Be extra cautious at curbs that have been cut away to allow access for bikes or wheelchairs. The incline may lead to a fall.
- Use a shoulder bag or fanny pack to leave your hands free.
- Use a walker or cane as needed for stability.



Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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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.