



# Grandparents Corner

August 2016

## *Dealing with Caregiver Stress and Burnout*

Once you burn out, caregiving is no longer a healthy option for either you or the person you're caring for. So, it's important to watch for the warning signs of caregiver burnout and take action right away when you recognize the problem. Below are some tips for dealing with caregiver stress and burnout:

**Tip 1 - Find Ways to Feel Empowered** - Feeling powerless is the Number One contributor to burnout and depression. It's an easy trap to fall into as a caregiver, especially if you feel stuck in a role you didn't expect or helpless to change things for the better. No matter the situation, you are powerless. This is especially true when it comes to your state of mind. You can't always get the extra time, money or physical assistance you'd like, but you can always get more happiness and hope.

- Embrace your caregiving choice. Acknowledge that, despite any resentments or burdens you feel, you have made a conscious choice to provide. Focus on the positive reasons behind that choice.
- Focus on the things you can control. You can't force people to help you out more. Rather than stressing out over things you can't control, focus on the way you choose to react to your problems.

**Tip 2 - Practice Acceptance** - When faced with the unfairness of the burden of caregiving, there's often a need to make sense of the situation and ask "Why?", but you can spend a tremendous amount of energy dwelling on things you can't change and for which there are no clear answers. And at the end of the day, you won't feel any better.

- Find the silver lining. Think about the ways caregiving has made you stronger or how it's brought you closer to the person you're caring for or to other family members. Think about how caregiving allows you to give back and show your love.
- Share your feelings. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the situation. Don't worry about being a burden to others. Most friends will be flattered that you trust them enough to confide in them, and it will only strengthen your bond.
- Avoid tunnel vision. Don't let caregiving take over your whole life. It's easier to accept a difficult situation when there are other areas of your life that are rewarding. Invest in things that give you meaning and purpose - whether it's your family, church, a favorite hobby, or your career.

**Tip 3 - Ask for Help** - Taking on all of the responsibilities of caregiving without regular breaks or assistance is a sure way to become burned out. Don't try to do it all alone. Enlist friends and family who live near you to run errands, bring a hot meal, or sit with your loved one so that you can take a well-deserved break.

- Speak up. Don't expect friends and family members to automatically know what you need or how you're feeling. Be up front about what's going on with you and the person you're caring for. If you have concerns or thoughts about how to improve the situation, express them - even if you're unsure how they'll be received.
- Spread the responsibility. Try to get as many family members involved as possible.

**Tip 4 - Give Yourself a Break** - As a busy caregiver, leisure time may seem like an impossible luxury. But you owe it to yourself - as well as to the person you're caring for. Give yourself permission to rest and to do the things you enjoy on a daily basis.

- Maintain your personal relationships. Don't let your friendships get lost in the shuffle of caregiving. These relationships will help sustain you and keep you positive. If it is difficult for you to leave the house, invite friends over to visit with you over coffee, tea or dinner.
- Prioritize activities that bring you enjoyment. Make regular time for things that bring you happiness, whether it's reading, working in the garden, knitting, playing with the dogs, or watching the game.
- Find ways to pamper yourself. Small luxuries can go a long way in relieving stress and boosting your spirits. Get a manicure. Buy fresh flowers for the house. Or whatever makes YOU happy.
- Make yourself laugh. Laughter is an excellent antidote to stress - and a little goes a long way. Read a funny book, watch a comedy, or call a friend who makes you laugh. Try to find humor in everyday situations.
- Get out of the house. Seek out friends and family to step in with caregiving so that you can have some time away.

There's a difference between being busy and being productive. If you're not regularly taking time off or a break to de-stress and recharge your batteries, you'll end up getting less done in the long run. After a break, you should feel more energetic and focused.

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

## QUICK QUIZ

*One of the most important aspects of emergency planning is keeping your family or the person in your care physically safe, which includes knowing where to go and where to meet in different disaster scenarios. Also think about how you will communicate in different emergency situations. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.*

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1. *As people age, their needs and capabilities change, so in preparing for a disaster, it's important to think differently than you might have at earlier ages. T F*
2. *The safest place to take shelter in a disaster depends on the type of disaster. T F*
3. *During a disaster, it may be easier to make long-distance calls than it is to make local ones. T F*
4. *In the emergency kit, a two-day supply of medications is sufficient. T F*
5. *One gallon of water per person per day for drinking and sanitation is required. If you live in a warm weather climate, more water may be necessary. T F*
6. *No disaster is more frequent or deadly for a person with a mobility disability than fire. T F*
7. *It is not important to maintain a smoke alarm. T F*
8. *Since rushing is a major cause of falls, even in an emergency, a person should not rush going up or down stairs. T F*
9. *Your local fire department does not help in evacuation planning. T F*
10. *You can sign up for text messages or emails to inform you about emergencies in your community through your local Office of Emergency Management (FEMA). T F*

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