

CARE *for the caregiver*

Helping Caregivers Care For Themselves

(NAPSA)—A growing number of people are caregivers—and may not even know it.

If you provide assistance to someone who is disabled or who needs help with day-to-day activities because of a chronic condition, cognitive limitations or aging, you are a caregiver.

Caregiving can mean shopping for groceries once a week for a homebound relative or neighbor, helping an aging parent with his or her finances, or providing hands-on care for a member of your household.

Who Is A Caregiver?

And you are not alone. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, more than 22 million households provide care for a family member, friend or loved one.

People of all ages—a child, a disabled person or an aging individual—can require long-term care. As a family caregiver, you give of your time, energy, strength and personal resources on an ongoing basis without financial compensation. Caregivers can be any age, male or female, working outside the home, or in the home full-time.

A factor that is sometimes ignored when caregiving is discussed is care for the caregiver.

While it is easy to become overwhelmed with caregiving responsibilities, it is critical to maintain your own life, complete with social, physical and emotional interactions.



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Caregivers should never underestimate the importance of their own well-being. Having a healthy mind, body and spirit are all positives that you bring into a caregiving relationship and benefit both the caregiver and receiver.

Signs To Watch For

There is no need to feel guilty about taking some time to take care of yourself. You need it and deserve it.

It's important to be aware of the signs that point to caregiver "burnout." Watch for:

- Excessive use of alcohol, medications or sleeping pills
- Appetite changes—either eating too much or too little
- Depression—hopelessness, feelings of alienation, lack of energy to do new things

- Thoughts of death
- Losing control physically or emotionally
- Neglect or rough treatment of the person for whom you are caring
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Difficulty concentrating, missing appointments.

Helpful Hints

- Check into support groups for caregivers.
- Look into respite programs with adult day centers, assisted living or nursing facilities that might be able to assist you with care on a periodic basis or consider a home health care agency. Respite care can offer temporary assistance to individuals so that the caregiver can rest or travel.
- Community services for support such as Meals on Wheels and Friendly Visitors can often be located by calling your local Area Agency on Aging.

The "Since You Care: Family Caregiving" guide, prepared by the National Alliance for Caregiving and the MetLife Mature Market Institute, assists individuals and families who have assumed the role of caregiver or anticipate future caregiving.

Single copies are available free from MetLife Mature Market Institute, 57 Greens Farms Road, Westport, CT 06880.

You may also call 1-203-221-6580 or e-mail maturemarketinstitute@metlife.com.