

Health Hints

Caregivers Need Care Too

(NAPSA)—Most people will have some experience with caregiving—either by providing care for a loved one or by needing care.

At one point in everyone's life, he or she will come to terms with what it means to be a caregiver.

Family caregivers support the nation's health care system by providing more than 80 percent of all homecare services.

The valuable contributions made by family caregivers are the reason that the National Family Caregivers Association would like to raise awareness about ways to support them. Caregivers need support as the job can be overwhelming. Some caregivers give so much to the people they care for that they ignore their own needs and experience physical and emotional burnout.

There are many ways you can help. Here are a few tips:

- **Cook up a meal.** Together with others in the community, you could bring dinner to a caregiving family once a week. If you can't cook up a meal, bring some cookies or treats, lemonade or a gift basket of fruit.

- **Treat them to some time off.** Stress can make you sick. Offer to babysit for an afternoon so the caregiver can go shopping, for a walk or to the movies or a show.

- **Socialize online for support.** Caregivers may find it hard to get out and about. Sites such as CaringBridge.org can connect caregivers to a network of support.

CaringBridge is a nonprofit organization that offers free personalized sites for those wishing to stay in touch with family and friends during a serious health event, care and recovery.



A personalized Web site can help you share your caregiving experiences with those in your inner circle.

“At some point, everyone knows someone with a health crisis,” said Sona Mehring, founder and executive director of CaringBridge. “Caregivers and family members tell me support is the most important part of recovery.”

- **Offer to help with the chores.** Don't take no for an answer. Rake the leaves. Mow the lawn. Wash the car. Doing a simple chore can free up valuable time for those who have little time of their own.

- **Encourage the caregiver to exercise.** Working out is a great stress reliever. A weekly yoga class has been shown to help manage or control anxiety. If there is no time for formal classes, encourage the caregiver to walk every day.

- **Focus on the funny.** A funny book, audiobook, movie or just a few jokes can make a world of difference in a person's outlook.