

Caring For Caregivers

Tips For Caregivers During The Holidays And Beyond

by James Huysman, PsyD, LCSW (NAPSA)—For caregivers, the holidays can be filled with warm family gatherings but may also be fraught with depression, anxiety and challenges that many others don't face. Here are some tips for caregivers this holiday season and beyond.

• **Give yourself a health and wellness gift.** Get a checkup, an assessment for anxiety or depression and a health screening. Find a therapist. Join a support group. Taking care of your personal health is the first step toward reducing stress.

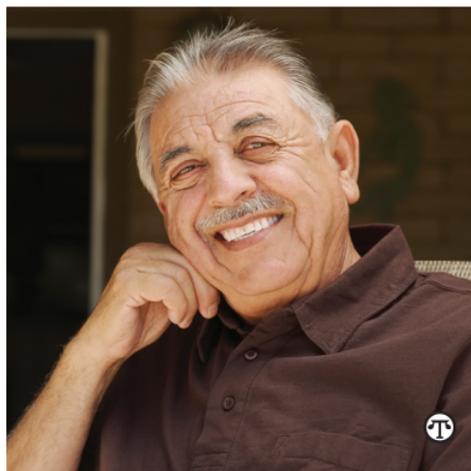
• **Ask for help and be open to accepting it.** Asking others for help may be the hardest thing one can face. Too often, people believe they must take care of everything themselves.

• **Find a friend or make a friendship even richer.** Sometimes a friend is all you need: a safe sounding board to relieve stress and lift your spirits.

• **Learn not to take things personally.** Realize that the people around you have their dramas too and their words, though hurtful, may have nothing to do with you. Sometimes the words come from people with their own stressful challenges.

• **Identify a supportive community.** Many caregivers are concerned that they are seen as a burden and are often reluctant to connect to the world around them. Finding a community outside the family can help caregivers understand that they exist in a community of loving people.

• **Plan your family's activities with thought throughout the season.** Roles and responsibilities are extremely important to explain. Ongoing family conferences help maintain the



Caregivers sometimes need a little TLC themselves.

boundaries necessary to the caregiving process so no one feels out of control or inadequate. This is vital and should be done in person as frequently as needed.

• **Keep a gratitude list in a journal filled with wonderful affirmations.** This can help shift the focus away from a difficult situation by creating a focus on gratefulness. This process can begin to inspire new avenues of thought.

• **Find humor everywhere you go.** Laughter is a great tension releaser, pain reducer and mood elevator. Use humor to get through difficult times.

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