

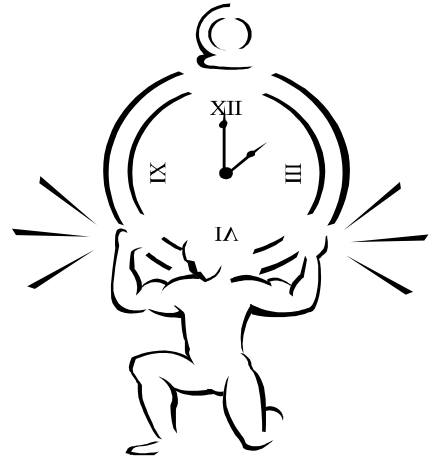
The Caregiver Toolbox

Preventing Burnout

Emotions Common in Caring for a Sick Family Member

Anger	Grief
Embarrassment	Isolation
Helplessness	Worry
Frustration	Guilt
Increased Closeness	Laughter

May feel like you are on a daily roller coaster!



Warning Signs of Stress & Burnout in Caregiving

- Become irritated over every little thing
- Lose the ability to laugh often
- Experience sleep disturbances (too much or not enough)
- Have difficulty thinking about how to get through a day
- Blame others for the situation
- Feel overwhelmed
- Are unable to concentrate
- Have stomach distress
- Either gain or lose weight
- Use alcohol and drugs to cope
- Neglect your own health
- Do not participate in activities, which you used to enjoy
- Feel like you have to do it ALL

If you experience **one** or more of these symptoms, you should take steps to alleviate the stress. **Caregivers who do not do so, risk deterioration in family relations, job performance, mental and physical health.**

What is Clinical Depression?

Clinical Depression IS a treatable illness. It is NOT:

- Just the blues or a bad mood
- A person feeling sorry for him/herself
- Emotional weakness
- Feeling stressed
- Laziness

Clinical Depression can be caused by:

- Losses, recent deaths of family or close friends
- Chronic illnesses (Stroke, heart disease etc.)
- Medications
- Bio-chemical changes in the body

Symptoms of Clinical Depression:

Very similar to stress and burnout. However-usually the person has **two or more of them and they last more than two weeks**. They may include thoughts of suicide or a suicide attempt.

Types of Treatment of Clinical Depression:

(used in combination usually)

- Counseling or Coaching in an individual or group setting-sometimes called talk therapy
- Medications (Primarily Anti-Depressants but also other types of medications)

Where To Go for Help/or More Information:

- Your family physician
- Employee Assistance Program(EAP)-Ask your employer
- National Institute of Mental Health(1-800-421-4211 or www.nimh.nih.gov)
- National Mental Health Association(1-800-433-5959 or www.nmha.org)
- National Foundation for Depressive Illness (1-800-239-1265 or www.depression.org)

Six Suggestions for Alleviating Stress and Preventing Burnout



1. Set Healthy Boundaries

In the area of caregiving, establishing healthy boundaries refers to a caregiver setting realistic expectations on **his/her own involvement** or **response** to a situation. Caregivers do **not** have the ability to set limits on another person's behavior; however, they can control **their own** response in a way that decreases stressful interactions.

- **In establishing healthy boundaries**, it can be helpful to identify the stressful situation, decide upon a realistic limit, write it down, try it and be willing to modify it later.
- Boundaries are **not punishments** or **retribution** but rather a means of remaining physically and emotionally healthy in the caregiver role.

2. Examine Your Expectations of Yourself, the Care Receiver, Family and Friends

How Realistic Are They—Given the Circumstances?

Possible Results of Unrealistic Expectations-Anger, Resentment, Frustration, Guilt, and Hard Feelings are all very common consequences of unrealistic expectations in caregiving. If you find yourself experiencing them often, you may need to examine your expectations and modify them in some way to experience less stress.

3. Consider Respite Care & Adult Day Health Services

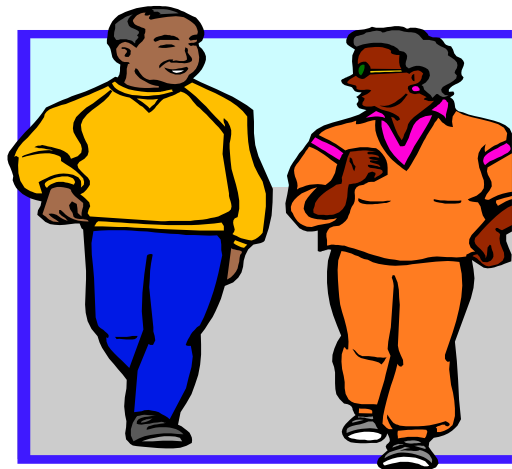
- **Respite care** is short term assistance by an outside provider (usually in the home) which allows the primary caregiver time free from his/her responsibilities.
- **Adult Day Health Services** provide assistance in a structured environment. Often they provide supervision with medications, social contact, leisure and therapeutic activities, nutritional meals, and transportation to and from the center.
 - Accessing and using outside support is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.
 - Providing opportunities for your loved one to be with others and for you to have a healthy break in routine is an opportunity that benefits everyone.
 - These choices are significantly less expensive than care in a facility.



4. Take Care of Your Physical and Emotional Health----Suggestions:

- **Give yourself a treat** -- Get a massage, buy a new outfit, try a new hairstyle, buy yourself some flowers, get an ice cream cone.
- **Think of** something that would be a total waste of time. Then do it!
- **Take a break** every day - even if it's only 10 or 20 minutes for quiet time.
- **Take a brisk walk.** It will help release muscle tension and clear the mind.
- **Consider getting a pet.** Stroking a pet lowers blood pressure.
- **Take up a new hobby** or revive an old one.
- **Try a bowl of cheerios and milk** before bed to promote sleep.
- **Reduce your daily caffeine** intake--especially in late afternoon.
- **Take care of yourself by** exercising, eating a well-balanced diet and getting regular medical check-ups.
- **Maintain old friendships** and develop new ones.
- **Plan your days** to achieve a sense of balance.

Self care for caregivers is NOT a luxury, it is a necessity.



5. Try Some Relaxation Techniques

There **are many** different types of relaxation techniques. **Try different methods** to see what works best for you.

Awareness Breathing (Deep Breathing)

1. Erase any stressful thoughts from your mind.
2. Relax your arms and shoulders. (You can be lying down, sitting or standing.)
3. Now take a deep breath. Let your abdomen - and then your chest fill with air.
4. Exhale slowly. Repeat the process until your breathing is regular and steady. Let your mind concentrate on each breath.

The Relaxing Sigh

1. Start by standing up or sitting up straight.
2. Sigh deeply, letting out a sound of deep relief as air rushes out of your lungs.
3. Inhale naturally - Just let the air flow in, Repeat several times.
4. After each exhale, shake your hands to 'do away' with the tensions you are feeling.

Imagery or Visualization

1. Close your eyes and take 3 long breaths. Breathe in through your nose, hold for 2 seconds & slowly exhale.
2. Imagine yourself in an ideal place -- a sunny tropical beach, a clear mountaintop, on a lake or in a candle lit cabin. The place can be anywhere that is pleasant to you.
3. Use all your senses - smell, touch, hearing, taste - to create your favorite scene.
4. Feel and visualize your entire body relaxing in the scenario.

Stretching

1. Do slowly and easily without bouncing. Bouncing could cause injury.
2. Stand with feet about shoulder length apart. With your arms straight up above your head, gently bend to the side at your waist and stretch, keeping your feet flat on the floor. Now do the other side - using slow gentle movement.
3. Gently and slowly roll your head in a counter clockwise position about 3 times, now reverse the direction.
4. Gently roll your shoulders forward and then backwards. This will help stretch and relax tight muscles.

6. Sleep!!

Sleep is as important as food and air. Quantity and quality are very important. Most people need between 7.5 to 8.5 hours of uninterrupted sleep. The amount of sleep you need to rest and restore your mind and body might be different than others.

To determine how much sleep you need, observe how much it takes for you to feel rested and alert during the day.

Tips for getting better sleep:

- Keep regular hours & organize your day as much as possible.
- Establish relaxing rituals before bedtime.
- Avoid bright light around the house before bedtime.
- Reserve your bed for sleeping. .
- Avoid all stimulants in the evening & remember that Nicotine is a stimulant.
- Avoid alcohol within three to four hours of bedtime. Alcohol may act as a sedative but it disrupts sleep patterns and causes awakenings later during the night.
- Exercise regularly.
- If you nap, try to nap about the same time each day.
- Check your medications. Many medications cause insomnia.
- Create a safe and comfortable sleeping environment.
- If you can't get to sleep for over 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something boring or relaxing in dim light until you are sleepy.

If you cannot get into a restful sleep routine and are not functioning normally, consult your doctor.

For More Information visit the National Center on Sleep Disorders which is within the National Institutes of Health. Website:
www.nhibi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/

