

Take a Break: Finding Respite in Caregiving

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It's a big task. The roles and responsibilities you have as a caregiver can be overwhelming. The hours spent in caregiving often leave little time for leisure and getting away for a while. If you don't take the time for respite, you may become ill. Then there will be two patients to take care of instead of one.

Because the demands of caregiving can continue indefinitely, it's important to understand the warning signs of stress and learn how to cope with the pressures you may be experiencing.

Warning Signs.

- No matter what you do, it doesn't seem like enough.
- You no longer have any time to be alone for even a little while.
- Your caregiving duties interfere with your work and personal life.
- You find yourself overeating or undereating, abusing drugs or alcohol, or you're taking your frustrations out on the care-receiver.
- You feel exhausted, resentful, frustrated, and angry all the time.

If you notice some of these warning signs, you are probably reaching caregiver burnout. It's time to take a break and get support from others.

Seek Respite Care

Respite care is an opportunity for the caregiver to get away from caregiving duties for a few hours or a few days. Persons can come into the home, or the care-receiver can be taken to another location to receive care.

Often you can find respite programs in hospitals, nursing homes, home healthcare agencies, adult day-care centers, religious organizations, and other agencies.

When friends and family offer assistance, let them do something. Also, don't be afraid to request their help when you need to take a break. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Your well-being is important. Even a 20-minute break each day will help reduce stress and prevent burnout.

Caregiving takes a lot of time and dedication. Remember that taking care of yourself benefits not only you, but also your family, your friends, and the care-receiver. Meeting your own needs will give you additional strength and energy to complete your caregiving tasks.