



# Appreciating Alzheimer's Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

---

## Caring for Someone with Alzheimer's

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can be physically and emotionally draining. Physical exhaustion paired with the heartbreak of seeing your loved one slowly forget who you are is a recipe for caregiver burnout.

In addition to the tips listed below for avoiding burnout, remember that feelings of frustration, anger, inadequacy, being trapped, resentment, and as a result of these, guilt, are all normal emotions to experience as a caregiver.

Talk about these feelings with someone who will understand, whether that person is a therapist, a fellow Alzheimer's caregiver or someone at a support organization. Stifling these emotions isn't good for your mental health, and can make you a less effective caregiver.

Also remember that taking a break is healthy – not selfish. Consider regular respite care for your loved one, which will give you the opportunity to rest and come back to your caregiver role refreshed.

Read on to learn more about caregiving and avoiding burnout.



90 MILLION  
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.<sup>1</sup>

1 MILLION AMERICANS  
are also caring for veterans from the IRAQ+AFGHANISTAN wars who have visible injuries and invisible wounds.

*True Dedication*  
A caregiver may help their loved one with **washing, dressing, eating** and other daily activities, as well as taking **medications**, getting to doctor's **appointments**, and so much more.

*Handle with CARE*  
Each member of our family has the ability to help a loved one with a chronic condition, illness, or disability that requires a series of tasks to manage care at home.

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Parkinson's
- Dementia
- Down's syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy
- Autism
- Cancer
- AIDS
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Depression

*To young and YOUNG AT HEART*  
Because of America's aging population, the number of people needing care has been rising, and is expected to keep going up. By 2020, people age 65 and older are expected to make up around **19%** of the American population, up from **14.8%** in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

However, parents caring for children with disabilities are also in the family caregiver ranks. Children with conditions like **autism, muscular dystrophy** and **down's syndrome** all require a caregiver, often through into adulthood.

**CAREGIVER BURNOUT**  
Caregiver burnout is when a caregiver becomes emotionally and physically exhausted under the strain of caring for another person. This can manifest as:

- Irritability and feeling blue
- Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns
- Withdrawing from friends and other loved ones
- Abandoning activities you used to enjoy
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Depression and/or anxiety

Six tips to **AVOID BURNOUT**<sup>SM</sup>

**Stay HEALTHY**  
It's easy to spend so much time thinking about your loved one's health that you can completely forget about your own. Make sure you take care of yourself, too – not work, exercise, and get enough sleep.

**Pursue your INTERESTS**  
Giving up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can leave you feeling empty. Try to find time to do the things you love to do. You'll be able to enjoy your life more.

**Take time to DE-STRESS**  
Consider taking up a stress-reducing activity like yoga, meditation, or deep breathing techniques that will help you let go of the stress of being a caregiver.

**Take A BREAK**  
Being a caregiver, although a labor of love, can be emotionally and physically draining. Give yourself time to be a caregiver every now and then to rest and recharge.

**Connect with other CAREGIVERS**  
Joining a support group or an online forum for caregivers can help you to feel less alone in your struggles and provide a sense of community.

**Seek and ACCEPT HELP**  
There's no shame in admitting you need help. Asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered, can lighten your load and make you better able to cope.

