



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.



Family
CARE GIVERS MONTH
November 2014
A publication of
newlifeoutlook

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
90 MILLION
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.¹

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.

Struggle with
CARE

Each member of a household has the luxury of being able to make choices about the services they need for themselves. But for many caregivers, the choices are more limited.

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Parkinson's
- Down's syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy
- Autism
- Cancer
- AIDS
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Alzheimer's
- 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 **20%** of the American population, up from **15.5%** in 2000.²

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^{3,4}



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 might even find a way to share your interests with your loved one.



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 is 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.

newlifeoutlook
November is National Family Caregivers Month. Share this is how you can help for the most vulnerable and at-risk of all Americans who willingly provide care for loved ones.

Resources:

- 1. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org
- 2. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org
- 3. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org
- 4. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org
- 5. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org
- 6. "2014 New Life Outlook: A National Survey of Caregivers." newlifeoutlook.org