



Care for Caregivers: How to Help Yourself as You Help Someone Else

Caring for an aging loved one can be one of life’s most rewarding and demanding experiences. When you’re offering time, energy and emotional support to someone you love, it’s easy to forget to take care of yourself. However, without proper self-care, caregivers often find themselves physically and mentally drained.

The Weight of Caregiving

Caring for aging parents or loved ones comes with many challenges. You may find yourself juggling doctor’s visits, managing medications or taking on tasks that your loved one used to be able to do for themselves. It can be emotionally distressing to witness their decline in health and independence, leading to feelings of helplessness and frustration.

Today, nearly 20% of the U.S. adult population provides unpaid care to an adult with health or functional needs. For many caregivers, this burden comes alongside raising children — they are members of what’s known as the “sandwich generation,” looking after an aging loved one while also supporting their young ones. Financial stress often follows, with almost half of caregivers reporting that they’ve taken on debt to support their loved one. The emotional toll is equally significant. Prolonged stress can lead to burnout, anxiety and depression, making it crucial for caregivers to prioritize their well-being.

Self-Care for the Caregiver

As you navigate the demands of caregiving, remember that caring for yourself is essential to maintaining the strength needed to help others. Some strategies to consider include:

Support Groups: Connecting with others who share similar experiences can be incredibly validating. Look for local or online caregiver support groups.

Mental Health Resources: Don’t hesitate to ask your loved one’s doctor for a referral to caregiver mental health services. You deserve support as much as the person you’re caring for.

Self-Care: Make space for what helps you recharge, like exercising, reading or spending time with friends.

Boundaries: It’s okay to say no sometimes, and perfectly reasonable that you may not be able to meet all your loved one’s needs. Define your limits and don’t overextend yourself.

Caring for someone else doesn’t mean you have to do it alone. Take time to care for yourself—because **you matter, too.**

#CareForCaregivers #RespectOurElders

If you or someone you know is older and struggling mentally, or needs support while caring for an aging loved one, you can find more resources through the **National Council on Aging** at www.ncoa.org.

