

## CAREING FOR THE CAREGIVER

Many Americans are fortunate to have their parents in their lives well into adulthood. While that comes with enormous benefits, it also means many Americans are responsible for caring for aging parents who need help with the tasks for daily living. In fact, a report by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP found that 53 million Americans are providing unpaid care for an adult or child (a huge increase from 43.5 million in 2015).

Caregiving can involve a lot of tasks, including shopping, house-keeping, transportation, feeding, bathing, dressing, coordinating appointments, and managing finances. Most important, it involves being depended on emotionally to provide a sense of safety and security. The physical and emotional toll of all this caregiving can be overwhelming and extremely stressful. In order to be there for someone else, caregivers need to care for themselves, which can also feel overwhelming. Caregivers often feel like they don't have the time or energy to care for their loved one, never mind themselves.

Here are some tips to help you manage the stress of caring for others, and yourself:

- **Accept help.** If someone offers help in any way, accept it! Don't fall into the trap of thinking "it would just be easier if I do it myself." Let people feel good about supporting you. It's smart to have a list ready of small tasks that others could easily take care of, such as picking up groceries or driving your loved one to an appointment.
- **Speak up.** Don't expect friends and family members to know what you need or how you're feeling. People will not know what you need—emotionally or logistically—unless you tell them. Be sure to advocate for yourself as well as you do for others.
- **Spread the responsibility.** Try to get as many friends and family members involved as possible. Even someone who lives far away can help. You may also want to divide up caregiving tasks. One person can take care of medical responsibilities, another with finances and bills, and another with groceries and errands, for example.
- **Eliminate the unnecessary.** Take a look at everything you have going on in your life, and get rid of the things that are not



mission critical. For example, this may not be the time to go on a diet, train for a 5k race, or start reading *War and Peace*. There are a lot of things we want to accomplish in life. Now may not be the right time to take on additional goals.

- **Be willing to relinquish some control.** Delegating is one thing, trying to control every aspect of care is another. People will be less likely to help if you micromanage, give orders, or insist on doing things your way.
- **Seek social support.** Make an effort to stay well-connected with family and friends who can offer emotional support. Set aside time each week for a face to face connection (social media doesn't count here), even if it's just a walk with a friend.
- **Seek professional advice and support.** Because there are so many Americans in a caregiving role, many organizations are now dedicating significant resource's to supporting caregivers. Find information on support groups and other resources here:
  - [www.aarp.org/caregiving](http://www.aarp.org/caregiving) Support Line: 1-877-333-5885, For Spanish- 1-888-971-2013
  - [thecaregiverspace.org](http://thecaregiverspace.org)
  - National Family Caregiver Alliance: [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)
  - Local Support: [www.esmv.org/programs-services/caregiver-support/](http://www.esmv.org/programs-services/caregiver-support/)

If you are struggling in a caregiver role, or with any other emotional stress, contact Family Services EAP today. We are here to help. Call 978-327-6666 or email [info@FamilyServicesEAP.org](mailto:info@FamilyServicesEAP.org).

All services are confidential!