



Ask to Come Home. Ask for Caldwell Hospice.



Caring for the Caregiver

Caring for an ailing loved one can be a heavy responsibility, with both rewards and challenges. The challenges can be overwhelming. Remember that, in order to provide care for your loved one, you must also take care of yourself. Balancing these responsibilities and getting occasional respite can help you avoid exhaustion and damage to your own health.

Tips for Caregivers

- Caregiving is a job and respite is your earned right. Reward yourself with respite breaks often.
- Accept help when it is offered, both at work and at home.
- Educate yourself about your loved one's condition and how to communicate effectively with doctors.
- Be good to your back. Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling.
- Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- Stand up for your rights as a caregiver.
- Know the resources available to you: Ashewood Grief and Counseling Services, Caldwell Department of Social Services, and Caldwell Senior Center.
- Recognize the emotional and physical toll that managing multiple responsibilities can have on you.

Warning Signs of Caregiver Stress

- Ignoring your own health problems or symptoms
- Not eating a healthy diet for lack of time
- Overusing tobacco and alcohol
- Giving up exercise habits for lack of time
- Losing sleep
- Losing connections with friends
- Holding in your feelings or acting out
- Feeling sad, depressed, overwhelmed, or hopeless
- Losing energy
- Feeling resentful toward family or friends
- Becoming increasingly impatient and irritable with the person you're caring for
- Catching every cold or flu going around

Ways to Cope with Caregiver Stress

- Increase pleasant social and physical activities.
- Talk about your feelings with others, including other caregivers.
- Try to remain flexible and accept that things will not always go as expected.
- Take action and gain a sense of control.
- Be prepared; know your loved one's condition and what to expect over the course of the illness.
- Take time to grieve the many losses that occur over the course of time.
- Don't expect to accomplish everything you did before you became a caregiver.
- Know that it is stressful to change roles and expectations.

(Source: NHPCO's *It's About How You Live At Work* series.)

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