

# HomeTimes®

## America's Choice In Home Care

Your resource for an at home senior lifestyle.



## Recognize All the Signs of Caregiver Stress & Burnout

Caring for an aging loved one is an important responsibility, but it can also be overwhelming. Managing their needs while focusing on your other family and work obligations can potentially lead to caregiver burnout.

### *What Are Signs of Caregiver Burnout & Stress?*

Common signs and symptoms of stress among family caregivers can include:

- Exhaustion, low energy, and fatigue
- Lack of sleep or irregular sleeping patterns
- Anxiety or worry
- Irritability or anger
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Physical pain, such as headaches and backaches
- Feelings of resentment or guilt
- Excessive smoking, drinking or eating
- No longer finding joy in caregiving or other activities
- Hyperfocus on caregiving responsibilities
- Lack of interest in eating well, exercising or social events
- Blaming your loved one or yourself for their situation

### *Make Time for Self-Care to Reduce Stress*

Although it might feel counterintuitive, taking time for yourself is actually the best thing you can do for everyone. Here are a few suggestions to manage stress and reduce the risk of caregiver burnout:

#### **Relaxation Practices**

Meditation, yoga, deep breathing, prayer, and mindfulness practices can relieve stress and be easily integrated into your daily routines. A short, five-minute meditation or prayer break can benefit your overall well-being.

#### **Support Groups**

Joining a caregiver support group in your area is a great way to connect with others who are caring for loved ones — and a helpful place to pick tips and suggestions to find balance in your life. Sharing your experience with others in similar situations can also be therapeutic.

#### **Proper Nutrition and Exercise**

A well-balanced diet can impact your personal welfare and give you the nutrients and energy you need to perform your daily activities. Moderate levels of exercise — such as brisk walking or taking the stairs — can increase energy, burn calories, and boost levels of feel-good hormones.

#### **Consult Your Doctor**

If taking steps to manage your stress has not provided relief, your doctor might have ideas to improve your mental and physical state.

#### **Respite Care and Family Support**

If you need help with caregiving, it's acceptable to ask. Family members may be able to provide support or handle some of your responsibilities temporarily or permanently. Hiring a professional in-home personal caregiver through Visiting Angels' respite care services is another option to give you a break so you can relax or attend to personal needs.

***If you feel that hiring a professional home care provider might be the right choice, contact your nearest Visiting Angels office today or call 800-365-4189.***



## Paranoia in the Elderly

When an elderly loved one develops paranoia, it can be alarming for everyone. Paranoia can cause seniors to experience chronic fear, frustration, anxiety, and loneliness.

Don't dismiss this condition as a natural part of aging. Consult a medical professional who will determine the cause of the issue and possible treatments. If paranoia goes unaddressed, symptoms may intensify and lead to more disturbing behaviors and actions.

### What is Paranoia?

Paranoia is a mental state that causes a person to consistently—and irrationally—feel threatened, worried, or fearful. Examples of paranoia in the elderly include:

- Thinking someone is talking behind their back or is “out to get them”
- Feeling they are being overly mistreated
- Worrying someone is going to steal their money or possessions
- Fearing family members no longer love them because they don't visit as often
- Becoming suspicious, distrustful, or jealous of others
- Hearing strange (non-threatening) noises that cause immense fear

### What Conditions Are Related to Paranoia?

Some seniors experience delusions, which are false viewpoints a person steadfastly believes even though factual evidence proves the contrary. For example, they may think a neighbor stole their watch even after repeated attempts to explain the timepiece was misplaced and eventually found.

Hallucinations can cause older adults to see, hear, smell, or feel things that aren't there. For example, they may imagine an intruder walking around the room at night or lurking outside their window.

### What Causes Paranoia in the Elderly?

Paranoia may be related to an underlying problem, such as:

- Dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease
- Brain tumors
- Brain damage caused by stroke or injury
- Medication side effects
- Psychiatric conditions
- Dehydration or heat-related illness
- Psychiatric conditions
- Untreated urinary tract infections
- Social isolation

If you suspect your loved one is experiencing any paranoia due to any of the issues listed above, consult your family doctor immediately.

### What to Do if a Loved One Experiences Paranoia

When symptoms strike at home, take the following steps to help your senior feel safe and secure:

#### Acknowledge Their Experience

Don't deny what they claim to see, hear, or feel, because it is real — and possibly very frightening — to them. Gently acknowledge their experience by saying, “I know you see/hear/feel/smell that, and it's OK.”

#### Provide Reassurance

Let them know they are safe, especially if they are feeling scared.

#### Avoid Escalating the Situation

Try not to overreact during a disagreement, even if they are accusing you of something that is not true. An argument could cause your senior to become increasingly agitated or upset.

#### Redirect

Try to redirect their attention to something pleasant, such as a new topic of conversation, music, or activity.

Always discuss any possible signs or symptoms with a medical professional.

### How Can an In-Home Caregiver Help?

Visiting Angels' caregivers can help your elderly loved one by preventing social isolation, maintaining a safe environment, and serving as a reassuring, comforting presence in the home. Additionally, a professional in-home caregiver can monitor for new or worsening signs and bring it to your attention.

**Contact your local home care office to learn how Visiting Angels can support a senior with paranoia. We will schedule a no-cost, no-obligation home care consultation.**