



Preventing Caregiver Burnout Before It Starts

If you are caring for a friend or family member who is battling an illness, you might find yourself stressed out or sick yourself. In fact, unpaid family caregivers of aging parents or loved ones describe their own health as poor. According to a [study by the American Family Physician](#), half of all caregivers have at least one chronic condition of their own. Add stress, unreliable sleep patterns, and incessant worry to an already physically and emotionally taxing role of caring for a failing loved one and you have the perfect storm for caregiver burnout.

Signs of caregiver burnout can include crying for no reason, depression, lack of interest in any activities or socialization outside of the home, and mood swings. Caregiver burnout can lead to decreased health for the caregiver, and can even lead to abusive situations that are caused out of stress and lack of coping skills.

Before you end up getting sick or acquiring a chronic health condition brought on by stress or caregiver burnout, take active and conscious steps to stop burnout before it starts. Living with an aging parent or spouse can be stressful for everyone. As the needs of your loved one increase, so do your caregiving tasks. While you might see the extra care and sleepless nights as a part of your marriage vows or family duty, becoming a full time caregiver for someone who is declining can take a major toll on everyone's health. Caregiver burnout is an emotional and physical fatigue that is caused by too much long term stress. It is a serious condition and can cause significant illness and health issues for everyone in the home.



1. Find your peers

Finding a caregiver support group can be an invaluable resource to anyone caring for an aging, or sick, loved one. In this facilitated group, you will be able to hear stories from others who are in the same situation as you are. You will end up sharing resources, encouragement, and a bond that will make you feel not so alone.

2. Find your coping skills

Stress in life is inevitable, and we must find ways to cope with it. Without proper coping skills to deal with mom's confusion or dad's bad attitude, caregivers can become angry,

sad, or indifferent. Caregivers must actively find, and then pursue, healthy coping skills that work for them. Try yoga, reading, meditation, gardening, walking, or writing. Build models, crochet, cook – whatever gives you an outlet so that you can combat stress and the lack of control that you likely feel on a daily basis. Remember – alcohol or drugs are not a healthy coping skill and can make you sick quickly, which doesn't help you or your loved one.

3. Find a healthy lifestyle

Besides finding a set of healthy coping skills, maintaining a healthy lifestyle can combat caregiver burnout. Make an effort to get enough sleep, even though it might seem impossible with your loved one's needs and erratic sleep patterns. Catch a nap or head to bed early so that your mind and body are getting the rest they need. Also, be sure you are getting plenty of water and healthy foods throughout your day. Your body is working under stress, and the more vitamins and good food that you can get, the better your immune system can fight any pesky colds or illnesses.

4. Find life outside of the home

One of the major factors that contributes to caregiver burnout is isolation. It is vital that you have a life and social network outside of the home. While you might feel guilty about leaving your loved one behind, it is important to your own mental and physical health to get some time doing whatever you want to do. If you know that your loved one is not safe at home alone, we would love to come alongside you on this journey. Our caregivers at [Visiting Angels of Wayzata](#) are committed to doing our part to keep everyone in the family healthy. Scheduling in a few hours per week can be a great first step in learning how our home care works, and giving you confidence to explore the world outside of your caregiver role. Let us help you keep yourself, and your loved one, healthy and safe.

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