



## Caring for the Caregiver

Whether you are a caregiver for an aging parent, ill spouse, or perhaps a family friend, caring for yourself is one of the most important things you can do. Why? Because when your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too.

### What You Can Do

**Prioritize.** As an employee, parent, spouse and/or grandparent, as well as caregiver, you may feel pulled in many different directions. You may find that you can't always do everything as it is requested and when it is requested. Instead of trying to do it all at once, make a list at the start of every day and prioritize things that absolutely must get accomplished, such as prescription refills, special family functions, doctor's appointments, and so forth. Roll over any unaccomplished tasks to the following day.

**Care for your whole self.** Make sure you are eating healthy, well-balanced meals; getting enough sleep; exercising regularly; and seeing your doctor for annual exams, along with treatment anytime you are feeling ill. In addition to your physical health, identify things that contribute to your emotional health. This may include spending quality time with your family, enjoying a hobby or activity, dining out, or perhaps, just some relaxation time spent reading a book or taking a nap. Whatever it may be—and it's different for everyone—make time for it.

**Watch for signs of depression.** It is not unusual for caregivers to develop mild or even major depression due to the constant demands of providing care. Depression is different from normal feelings of sadness, grief, or low energy. It is not a 'blue' mood that you can suddenly snap out of, or a sign of weakness. Depression is a chronic illness, and it's treatable. The following are some possible signs of depression:

- Persistently sad, empty, or anxious feelings
- Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
- Feeling guilty, helpless or worthless
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyable, including intimacy
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions and remembering details
- Trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping, and early morning awakening
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Physical aches and pains, cramps, headaches and digestive problems that do not respond to medical treatment

If you believe that you or someone you know may be suffering from depression, your Employee Assistance Program offers confidential assessments and quick referrals to treatment providers in your area. Simply call the phone number listed below, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Find support.** When you feel like you are dealing with more than you can handle, or just need a break, ask for help. Depending on your needs, this may be in the form of talking to a professional counselor, joining a support group, or even blowing off steam with a friend. In addition, try to identify someone who can provide back-up care if you need to step away for whatever reason.

For more information and support about caregiving, visit the website or call the toll free number listed below.



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