

## Feeling Stretched as a Caregiver?

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It's a fact, caregivers have higher levels of stress than non-caregivers. If you are serving as a caregiver to a loved one, I want you to know you are fulfilling a valuable role! I also want you to know, that it is ok to take care of yourself too.



While we can't stop stress from occurring, we can help manage it. Too much stress, especially over a long time, can harm your health. You may not get enough sleep or physical activity, or eat a balanced diet – which increases your risk of medical problems.

The following are some ideas to help you manage your caregiver stress:

- Take a break from caregiving. Take a walk or meet up with a friend. Do something not related to caregiving.
- Get support. Attend a support group, have a friend you can call just to let off steam, or look for community resources.
- Relax. Read a book, meditate, pray, garden, knit, take a long bath.
- Take care of your health. Go to the doctor, get routine exams and flu shots, get enough sleep, and eat your fruits and vegetables.
- Change “guilt” to “regret.” Guilt means you did something wrong, regret means that you are in a difficult situation and sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, but they are not wrong.
- Forgive yourself—often. You cannot be a perfect caregiver, all day, every day.
- Ask for and accept help when offered. No one can do this alone. We often don't know what to say when someone offers help. Prepare for this and create a task list to have ready. When someone asks you if they can help, refer to your list and say “YES.” Let them choose what task on the list they would like to do!
- And finally....Laugh. Find ways to keep your sense of humor on a daily basis.

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