

# Feeling Overwhelmed – Caring for a Loved One?

It is very important as a caregiver to not only take good care of your loved one, but also to take good care of yourself. The following information contains helpful hints on how you as a caregiver can maintain a positive attitude, keep yourself physically and emotionally healthy, and “keep your cool” in the midst of the difficulties and challenges of caregiving.

## Simple Things That You Can Do For Yourself

- Celebrate small successes and good days.
- Maintain meaningful relationships with family and friends.
- Understand and accept your feelings as normal human responses.
- Make realistic commitments - adjust priorities to match time, energy, and motivation.
- Take time off to restore yourself (take a walk, read a book, practice a hobby, etc.).
- Identify positive things in your life – list your accomplishments as a caregiver and allow yourself to feel good about the role you play in your loved one’s life.
- Find ways to reassure and reward yourself.
- Don’t neglect yourself. It won’t make your loved one feel any better, and it will diminish your capacity to provide good care.
- Get enough sleep. If you’re rested, you will be more patient and efficient in caregiving.
- Stretch. Tense neck, shoulder and back muscles can create fatigue and cause injury.
- Remain flexible and keep the capacity to alter your perspective as changes occur.
- Retain a tolerance for inevitable mistakes - Remember that NO ONE is perfect.
- Retain a sense of humor and use it often.

## Seek Outside Information & Assistance

- Educate yourself regarding your loved one’s condition and what care may be needed.
- Don’t feel guilty about asking others for help. Ask for and accept help. Remember that you need to get away at times, so delegate roles to others and keep other family members involved.
- Join a caregiver support group. This will give you a safe place to vent your feelings and frustration, as well as get valuable advice from other caregivers.
- Seek advice from health care providers, social workers and counselors regarding community resources and personal care.
- Check out resources for day care, respite, and other community resources before they may be needed, and keep this information close by.

## **Are You Caring for an Aging Parent?**

If caring for an aging parent, you are not alone. One in four households in America currently provide some form of parent care. Many adult children, such as yourself, and their aging parents find the “role reversal”, which occurs as the parent becomes more dependent upon the child, a very difficult adjustment. In many cases the adult child provides not only parent care, but often is “sandwiched” between the added responsibilities of marriage, child rearing, financial obligations, and their career. The pressures faced by individuals, such as yourself, in the “Sandwich Generation” often may seem unbearable, yet there is help and hope. A number of excellent resources are available within the community to assist caregivers. These may include,

but are not limited to, adult day care, respite services, and support groups, as well as valuable educational resources and materials.

### **Dealing with Feelings of Guilt, Anger, and Frustration**

Many individuals, perhaps you included, struggle with feelings of frustration, anger, and guilt while caring for an elderly loved one. Some adult children feel as though their parent is using guilt and manipulation to “push their buttons” in order to get a desired response. Others may feel angry or cheated by the fact that their parent has become old and frail. Still others may feel guilty for viewing their parent’s care needs as an unwelcome burden in their life. This in turn may result in not only feelings of guilt, but also anger, and frustration.

There is no question that caring for an elderly parent or loved one can evoke a number of feelings and emotions. It is important to remember, however, that it is not wrong to have these feelings as long as you do not act upon them inappropriately. If under extreme stress temporarily remove yourself from the caregiving situation and seek respite or professional assistance. To do so does not make you a “failure,” but rather just the opposite. Successful caregiving depends first and foremost upon your ability to recognize your own needs and limitations, as well as take good care of yourself as a caregiver.

#### **For information or assistance in Kent County contact the Caregiver Resource Network:**

Area Agency on Aging  
of Western Michigan  
(616) 456-5664

Gerontology Network  
(616) 456-6135

HHS, Health Options  
(616) 956-9440

Senior Neighbors, Inc.  
(616) 459-6019

This Fact Sheet is provided as a public service of the Caregiver Resource Network. The **Caregiver Resource Network** is a partnership of Kent County organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American’s Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Respite funds.

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