

# Caregiver's Corner Column (August 2014)

## Are You Ready For Some Respite?

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Are you one of the over 50 million people that provided care for chronically ill, disabled or aged family members during the past year, as reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services? If so, seventeen percent of you are providing 40 hours or more of care per week, according to a study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. Over 75% of you are working a full or part-time job then caring for your elderly relative. The majority of you are female and are living the closest to your family member. You give of your time and also a part of your checkbook, paying for many personal care items out of your own pocket. As a caregiver you are at a higher risk for many stress-related health problems, including depression and chronic illnesses.

### The Facts

- Family caregivers suffer from chronic conditions more than twice the rate as non-caregivers
- Stress from providing care can take as much as ten years off a family caregiver's life
- Compared to non-caregivers, the likelihood of experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety are twice as high for adult children caregivers and six times as high for spousal caregivers
- Elderly spousal caregivers with their own history of illness, and who are experiencing care-related stress, have a 63 percent higher mortality rate than their non-caregiving peers

### So what is a Caregiver to do?

- If you are currently employed, let your manager know about your caregiving situation. There may be resources available to you such as an Employee Assistance Program, the Family Leave Act, or the possibility of a flex-time schedule
- Don't do it all alone; get help! Caregivers who get help are less likely to burn out and are better able to provide long-term support to their relatives
- Talk to your family members, make a plan with siblings, bring in extended family members for support with caregiving, shopping, finances etc...
- Identify community resources that provide services to seniors and caregivers. Make connections with your local Area Agency on Aging, faith-based services, or county social services
- Talk to your friends and co-workers. They may be dealing with similar situations and may have some valuable advice
- Ask for help! People want to feel valued, and will likely be more than happy to help out, give them the chance

### Care for the Caregiver

- #1- YOU cannot care for others if you don't take care of YOURSELF
- Take the time to eat, and eat healthy foods
- Get enough sleep

- Exercise regularly
- Take moments to relax, read, listen to music, watch a movie, enjoy a craft
- Share your burden. Talk to a friend, join a support group
- Be mindful of your own health and keep your medical appointments

Respite Care - “An interval of rest or relief”-Merriam-Webster

- Respite Care is care provided by another party for your loved one. It can be provided in-home, at a day center, or in an elder care community. Costs vary by hours of care provided and by the community or care center you select. Respite care can be for a matter of hours or a matter of weeks
- Consider respite services much earlier than you think you will need them. Don’t wait until you are exhausted, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Respite is often a gift not only for the caregiver, but also for the one receiving care
- Plan your respite to make the most of your break. This time is invaluable to you and to your loved one

Locating Local Respite Providers

- Respite can be provided by the many local Home Care providers, Assisted Living Communities and Adult Day Care Centers.
- Check out the services page on the Caregiver Resource Network website ([www.caregiverresource.net](http://www.caregiverresource.net)) for Respite and Adult Day Care options in Western Michigan.

*Caregiver’s Corner* is provided as a public service of the **Caregiver Resource Network**. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of West Michigan 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 IIIIE, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at [www.CaregiverResource.net](http://www.CaregiverResource.net) or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.