



TAKING CARE OF THE CAREGIVER



Caregivers are at risk of becoming sick themselves unless they make a special effort to stay healthy and happy. Only then can they lovingly care for someone who is seriously ill. As a caregiver, it's important to take care of yourself so you don't suffer mental and physical exhaustion. If you burn out, who will take care of the sick person?

Sane, not Saintly

We sometimes think it's better to sacrifice and constantly give of ourselves even when it feels uncomfortable to do so. It's time to let go of this way of thinking. Our actions need to take into account our own needs as well as those of the ill person. Doing things we don't feel right about can lead to burnout and illness. Getting sick yourself will not make someone else healthy but only add to their burden. Listen to your feelings. If something feels good, then by all means do it. If not, don't! Ask for help. Perhaps someone else can lift your patient or bathe them—things you can't or don't want to do.

Keep Up With Your Own Life

You need to keep doing the things you enjoy so you don't become resentful of the demands the ill person places on your time. Get outside help for several days each week so you can get out of the house and have some fun. Find creative ways to maintain the activities that give you joy in your life. Reach out and connect with family, friends, and community for continuing support and fresh ideas.

Talk the Hard Talk

Be honest with each other about the implications of the illness, including death. One of the most devastating parts of chronic or terminal illness is the isolation that can occur because family and friends fear death and dying. Many lessons can be learned or reinforced near the end of life. Try to let everyone gain as you go through this transition.

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