

Resources for Living®

Stepping up to the challenges of caregiving



Caregiving can be one of the great privileges of life. It's a chance to extend love, empathy and understanding to another; to give or return caring you once got.

But it does come with challenges. When you become a caregiver, you step up to a big job.

What do caregivers do?

As a caregiver, you help a friend or family member with tasks he or she can't do alone. You may run errands, shop, pay bills or cook. You may go to doctors' appointments. You may help make decisions about personal, financial and medical care. You may listen and comfort.

How do caregivers hold up?

Caregiving can be physically and emotionally draining. It can create many different feelings. You may be angry, loving, sad, guilty, happy and tired — all in the space of one day.

You're entitled to all your feelings. But it's important for your own welfare — and that of the loved one you're caring for — to know when to ask for help.

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Caregivers need care, too

Caregivers can experience burnout if they don't take care of themselves. They need to be kind to themselves, take time off and get support. Here are just some ways caregivers can find help:

- **Research helpful websites.** Visit www.caregiver.org and www.caregiveraction.org. These are just two examples of resources for programs, support groups, educational material and more.
- **Join a support group that's run by a qualified professional.** These groups allow caregivers to talk about common feelings and issues. Contact a nursing home or medical provider to find out about local meetings.
- **Accept support from family and friends.** But don't expect them to read your mind as to when you need help and what you need. Instead, be specific. You might say something like, "Could you please take Mom to her 2 PM doctor's appointment next Tuesday?" People who care about you will be happy to know exactly how to help.
- **Talk to a counselor or life coach.** These professionals can help you find new ways to tackle the trials you face.

Caregiving: the bottom line

Challenges? Yes. Rewards? Yes. As with most other hard things in life, caregiving can give you a healthy dose of both. And self-care can help make you a better caregiver.