

Let's Talk: Caregiving

Presenter – Lynn Borteck, Clinical Counselor

Hi, I'm Lynn Borteck. Let's talk about caregiving. Many people are caregivers. You might provide care for a child, a spouse, a family member or friend, or an elderly parent. Lots of people are caregivers. I've been one myself and I know from my own experience and perhaps you're learning from yours, that there are great rewards in caregiving. You get to forge bonds that you might not otherwise have time for or have an opportunity for and at the same time there are lots of challenges.

Informal caregivers

If you're taking care of a loved one and holding down a job at the same time, and you're not getting paid for your services, you're what's called an informal caregiver. That's a person who has another life separate from caregiving and there are about 50 million people in the United States who are providing informal care. If they were paid for their services, it would cost over \$375 million.

Day-to-day help

Caregiving can include life management tasks which are pretty much organizational. Things like helping someone pay bills, helping someone organize their shelves in their house, helping them run errands and get things done. Or it can even be hands-on help, where someone really needs your help to get dressed, to go to the bathroom, to take a shower, or you might even need to help feed someone.

Managing stress

As you might guess, caregiving can be really stressful. I mean, you're handling a lot of things for someone else while you're probably trying to take care of your own life, your own work, your own family, and yourself. Caregivers can get lonely, anxious, depressed, and even sick. So what can caregivers do to take care of themselves?

Care for the caregiver

So if you're a caregiver, how can you help yourself? Number one, you need to take care of yourself. Make your own care a priority. You have to make sure that you're taking a break every single day. Also, if people ask you if they can help, say yes. Let them know what they can do to help you. Don't

try to be a martyr and do everything. And when it comes to the person you're caring for, if they're competent, let them participate in the decisions that you make. Also don't do things that they can do for themselves. Encourage them to be independent. It'll make your job easier and it'll make them feel better about themselves too.

The value of support

Caregiving can be short term, like when you take care of someone after they come out of rehab or when they've just come home from the hospital or it can be long term. In either case, as a caregiver you need support and you need to take care of yourself. Thanks for talking.

Visual cue:

Find resources at: [Caregivers.com](https://www.caregivers.com) and [The National Alliance for Caregivers website](https://www.nac.com) (nac.com)

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Sources

50 million informal caregivers:

¹ Cohen et al. Psychosocial factors of caregiver burden in child caregivers: results from the new national study of caregiving. [Scholars Compass website](https://www.scholarscompass.com). Virginia Commonwealth University. Accessed March 2018.

How much caregivers would get paid:

² Caregiving. Family Caregiver Alliance. [Caregiving website](https://www.caregiving.com). Accessed March 2018.

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