

Caring for Yourself

Taking care of yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver. This could mean asking family members or friends to help out, doing things you enjoy, using adult day care services, or getting help from a local home health care agency. Taking these actions can bring you some relief. It also may help keep you from getting ill or depressed.

Here are some ways you can take care of yourself:

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Join a caregivers' support group.
- Take breaks each day.
- Spend time with friends.
- Keep up with your hobbies and interests.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Get exercise as often as you can.
- See your doctor on a regular basis.
- Keep your health, legal, and financial information up-to-date.

It's Okay to Ask for Help

Many caregivers find it hard to ask for help. They feel like they should do everything themselves, or that no one will help even if they ask. They may think it's not right to leave the person with Alzheimer's disease with someone else. Maybe they cannot afford to pay someone to watch the person for an hour or two.

It's okay to ask for help from family and friends. You don't have to do everything yourself. If you have trouble asking for help, try these tips:

- Ask people to help out in specific ways like making a meal, visiting the person with Alzheimer's, or taking the person out for a short time.
- Join a support group to share advice and understanding with other caregivers. These groups meet in person or online. Ask the person's doctor, check online, or contact Alzheimer's San Diego.
- Call for help from home health care or adult day care services when you need it. To find providers in your area, contact Alzheimer's San Diego at 858-492-4400.

- Use national and local resources to find out how to pay for some of this help. To learn more about government benefits, see www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/when-you-need-help/getting-help-caregiving.

If you are a veteran or caring for one, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) might be of help to you. To learn more, visit the VA caregivers' website at www.caregiver.va.gov or call toll-free at 855-260-3274.

Your Emotional Health

You may be busy caring for the person with Alzheimer's disease and don't take time to think about your emotional health. But, you need to. Caring for a person with Alzheimer's takes a lot of time and effort. Sometimes, you may feel discouraged, sad, lonely, frustrated, confused, or angry. *These feelings are normal.*

Here are some things you can say to yourself that might help you feel better:

- I'm doing the best I can.
- What I'm doing would be hard for anyone.
- I'm not perfect, but that's okay.
- I can't control some things that happen.
- Sometimes, I just need to do what works for right now.
- Even when I do everything I can think of, the person with Alzheimer's disease will still have problem behaviors because of the illness, not because of what I do.
- I will enjoy the moments when we can be together in peace.
- I will try to get help from a counselor if caregiving becomes too much for me.

Meeting Your Spiritual Needs

As the caregiver of a person with Alzheimer's, you may need more spiritual resources than others do. Meeting your spiritual needs can help you cope better as a caregiver and find a sense of balance and peace. Some people like to be involved with others as part of a faith community, such as a church, temple, or mosque. For others, simply having a sense that larger forces are at work in the world helps meet their spiritual needs.

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