

alzheimer's  association®

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND
MANAGE CAREGIVER STRESS



10 COMMON SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

- 1. Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed.
I know Mom is going to get better.
- 2. Anger** at the person living with Alzheimer's or frustration that he or she can't do the things that once came naturally.
He knows how to get dressed — he's just being stubborn.
- 3. Social withdrawal** from friends and activities.
I don't care about visiting neighbors anymore.
- 4. Anxiety** about the future.
What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?
- 5. Depression** that affects your ability to cope.
I just don't care anymore.
- 6. Exhaustion** that interferes with important daily tasks.
I'm too tired for this.
- 7. Sleeplessness** caused by worrying.
What if she wanders out of the house?
- 8. Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses.
Leave me alone!
- 9. Lack of concentration** that disrupts familiar tasks.
I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.
- 10. Health problems** that begin to take a mental and physical toll.
I can't remember the last time I felt good.

10 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS AND BE A HEALTHIER CAREGIVER

Are you so overwhelmed by taking care of someone else that you've neglected your own physical, mental and emotional well-being? To avoid putting your own health at risk, consider the following tips.

1. Take a break.

Respite care services can give you a temporary rest from caregiving while the person with Alzheimer's continues to receive care in a safe environment. Visit alz.org/care to learn more.

2. Seek out community resources.

Visit **Alzheimer's Association AARP Community Resource Finder** (alz.org/CRF) to access a database of dementia and aging-related resources in your area. Adult day programs, in-home assistance, visiting nurses and meal delivery are just some of the services that can help you manage daily tasks.

3. Become an educated caregiver.

As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills may be needed. The Association offers programs to help you better understand and cope with common behavioral and personality changes that often accompany Alzheimer's. Visit alz.org/care to learn more and access care training resources, including free online workshops.

4. Get help and find support.

Our **24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)**, **ALZConnected**[®] online social networking community (alzconnected.org) and local

support groups ([alz.org/CRF](https://www.alz.org/CRF)) are good resources. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek help from a doctor or counselor.

5. Take care of your own health.

Try to eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you are healthy can help you be a better caregiver.

6. Manage your level of stress.

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach upset, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms and discuss with a doctor, as needed.

7. Accept changes as they occur.

People living with Alzheimer's or another dementia change over time and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Becoming aware of community resources — from home care services to residential care — can make the transition easier. So will the support and assistance of those around you.

8. Make legal and financial plans.

Putting legal and financial plans in place after an Alzheimer's diagnosis allows the person





living with the disease to participate in decision making. Having these plans in place can provide comfort to the entire family. Many documents, including advance directives, can be prepared without the help of a legal professional. However, if you're unsure about how to complete legal documents or make financial plans, you may want to seek assistance from an attorney specializing in elder law, a financial advisor who is familiar with elder or long-term care planning, or both.

9. Know you're doing your best.

Remember that the care you provide makes a difference and that you're doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but care needs increase as Alzheimer's progresses. Regardless of how care is delivered, you can make sure that the person living with the disease is well cared for and safe.

10. Visit your doctor regularly.

Take time to get regular checkups and pay attention to any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness or changes in your appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.



alz.org/care

Access reliable information and resources, such as:

- » Alzheimer's Navigator® – Assess your needs and create customized action plans.
- » Community Resource Finder – Find local resources.
- » ALZConnected® – Connect with others affected by dementia.
- » Safety Resources – Access information and tips.



alz.org/CRF

Get easy access to resources, community programs and services in your area.



800.272.3900

24/7 Helpline – Available around the clock, 365 days a year.

alzheimer's association®

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease®.

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