# 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 daily tasks.
*I'm too tired for this.*

**7. Sleeplessness** caused by worrying.
*What if she wanders out of the house?*

**8. Irritability** that 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.*



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**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.**

Consider using respite care services to allow 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, companions 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, it may become necessary to adopt new caregiving skills. The Association offers programs to help you better understand and cope with common behavioral and personality changes that may occur. Visit the **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center** (**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**) 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 irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms and discuss with a doctor, as needed.



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**7. Accept changes as they occur.**
People with Alzheimer's 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 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 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 appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

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