

The desire to care for a loved one in a time of need tends to instinctively come naturally. It feels good to be able to care for someone and it can give new meaning to your relationship. However, being a caregiver can also be challenging.

Some caregivers become overwhelmed with the amount of care their loved one needs. In addition, many caregivers provide around-the-clock care, leaving little time for work, family or friends. The emotional and physical stress of caregiving is referred to as caregiver stress. It may include feelings of depression, anxiety, exhaustion, irritability, resent and even guilt. It can be particularly disheartening when there is no possibility that your family member will get better.

If the stress of caregiving is left unchecked, it can affect physical and mental health. As a caregiver, caring for one's self becomes a necessity, not a luxury. At Hospice Renfrew, we interact with caregivers often and we offer these tips to help:

Care For The Caregiver

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Manager of Volunteer
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1. Speak up. Most often friends and family members do not know what you need or how you're feeling. Be honest and tell them what's going on. If they can help you, let them know.

2. Share the responsibility. Try to get as many family members and friends to share the load and divide up caregiving tasks (groceries, drug store runs).

3. Arrange a time for regular updates. Ask a family member, friend, or volunteer to call you on a regular basis (daily or

weekly). They can help you relay information and updates to family and friends.

4. Accept help when it is offered. Don't be shy to say "yes" when someone offers to help, and keep a list of things others can do for you.

5. Be willing to let go of some control. Delegate tasks and trust the person to do them for you.

6. Give yourself a break. Rest when you are able and try to make sleep a priority. Indulge in a treat or let someone pamper

you with a massage or spa treatment.

7. Consider Respite Care: Ask your local CCAC or health care practitioner for a list of options. A break of 1-2 weeks will help you recharge.

8. Compassionate Care Benefit. If you work outside the home and are feeling overwhelmed, consider taking a compassionate care leave. This is paid to people who must be away from work temporarily to provide care or support to a family member who is gravely ill and who has a significant risk of death within six months. Up to 26 weeks of benefits may be paid. Ask your human resources office about your options.

ASK THE EXPERT:

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