

Dealing with Caregiver Stress

This tip sheet is about caregiver stress. It shares ideas for managing the day-to-day stress that comes with caring for someone else. It can be useful information for direct support professionals (DSPs) to have available.

What is Caregiver Stress?

Caregiving is vital and important work. It can be very rewarding to care for others but is often stressful as well. When you focus on providing care to someone, you can easily neglect your own physical and emotional health.

Caregiver stress can occur as a result of the emotional and physical strain of giving care to another person. If not resolved, caregiver stress could lead to **burnout**, which is when you are so stressed for so long that you become exhausted emotionally, physically, and mentally. Caregiver stress could also lead to **compassion fatigue**, which is a reduced ability to feel empathy or compassion for others due to too much stress or exhaustion.



Caregiver stress can be dangerous to your mental health. This type of stress can potentially lead to the harm of the individuals you support, such as neglecting the needs of an individual or other forms of abuse (verbal, emotional, physical or psychological).

Daily Stress Management Tips

Make some time every day to care for yourself! Here are some ideas on how to do that from the Mayo Clinic:¹

- **Accept help** - Be prepared with a list of ways that others can help you, and let the helper choose what they want to do. For example, can someone help you run errands? Can you go for a walk with a friend once a week?
- **Focus on what you can do** - It's normal to feel guilty sometimes but understand that no one is the "perfect" caregiver. Believe that you are doing your best.
- **Set realistic goals** - You can break large caregiving tasks into smaller steps and focus on doing each one step at a time. Consider saying "no" to social activities that could be draining for you, such as hosting parties or holiday meals.

¹ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/caregiver-stress/art-20044784>

- **Get connected with support**, such as finding caregiving resources or support groups in your community. There may be caretaking classes or other services that may be helpful.
- **Set personal health goals**, such as establishing a good sleep routine, finding time to be physically active most days of the week, or drinking more water.
- **See your doctor** – If you have trouble sleeping or have any other concerns.



Additional Resources

- <https://caregiver.com/articles/caregiver-stress-syndrome>
- From the Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/caregiver-stress/art-20044784>