



# Appreciating Cancer Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

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## Avoiding Cancer Caregiver Burnout

Caring for someone with cancer can be emotionally and physically draining. The physical strain paired with the heartbreak of watching someone you love suffer is a recipe for caregiver burnout.

For the sake of your health and the person you are caring for, it's important to do what you can to prevent burnout. In addition to the tips listed below, remember that feelings of loss, frustration, anger and resentment are totally normal, and do not make you a bad person or less of a caregiver.

Instead of hiding those feelings, talk about them with someone who will understand – a therapist, a fellow caregiver or someone at a support organization. Talking it out with someone will do wonders for your mental health and make you better able to devote yourself to your loved one.

Read on to learn more about caregiving and avoiding burnout.



90 MILLION  
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.<sup>1</sup>

1 MILLION AMERICANS  
are also caring for veterans from the IRAQ+AFGHANISTAN wars who have visible injuries and invisible wounds.

*True Dedication*  
A caregiver may help their loved one with **washing, dressing, eating** and other daily activities, as well as taking **medications**, getting to doctor's **appointments**, and so much more.

*Struggle with CARE*  
Each member of a household has the history of how it changed the course of their lives. The challenges that we face as a family are many.

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Fibromyalgia
- Crohn's
- Down's syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy
- Autism
- Cancer
- AIDS
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Alzheimer's
- Parkinson's

*To young and YOUNG AT HEART*  
Because of America's aging population, the number of people needing care has been rising, and is expected to keep going up. By 2020, people age 65 and older are expected to make up around **19%** of the American population, up from **14.5%** in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

However, parents caring for children with disabilities are also in the family caregiver ranks. Children with conditions like **autism, muscular dystrophy** and **down's syndrome** all require a caregiver, often through into adulthood.

**CAREGIVER BURNOUT**  
Caregiver burnout is when a caregiver becomes emotionally and physically exhausted under the strain of caring for another person. This can manifest as:

- Irritability and feeling blue
- Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns
- Withdrawing from friends and other loved ones
- Abandoning activities you used to enjoy
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Depression and/or anxiety

Six tips to **AVOID BURNOUT**<sup>SM</sup>

**Stay HEALTHY**  
It's easy to spend so much time thinking about your loved one's health that you can completely forget about your own. Make sure you take care of yourself, too – not work, exercise and get enough sleep.

**Pursue your INTERESTS**  
Giving up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can leave you feeling empty. Try to find time to do the things you love to do. You might even find a way to share your interests with your loved one.

**Take time to DE-STRESS**  
Consider taking up a stress-reducing activity like yoga, meditation or deep breathing techniques that will help you let go of the stress of being a caregiver.

**Take A BREAK**  
Being a caregiver, although a labor of love, can be emotionally and physically draining. Give yourself time to be a caregiver every now and then to rest and recharge.

**Connect with other CAREGIVERS**  
Joining a support group or an online forum for caregivers can help you to feel less alone in your struggles and provide a sense of community.

**Seek and ACCEPT HELP**  
There is no shame in admitting you need help. Asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered, can lighten your load and make you better able to cope.

