

Letting Go of Stress

Stress is the wear and tear on the body, mind and spirit in the exercise of adapting to change or a threat. It is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Caregivers are susceptible to stress due to the demands of caregiving. Temperament affects response to the constant demands of caregiving. Everyone has strengths and vulnerabilities when dealing with stressful situations. Feeling overwhelmed can be a result of fatigue, inadequate support, being ill or emotional duress. You will recognize some of the signs of caregiver stress.

Muscle Tension

Muscle tension can be relieved by a massage, a hot shower or relaxation.

Migraines

Treating migraines is best done by demanding some quiet, low sound, low light, resting, and taking pain medication.

Ulcers

Ulcers are treated by taking prescribed ulcer medication and improving your diet to avoid foods that trigger your symptoms.

Memory Loss and Confusion

Memory loss and confusion call for some time alone as well as making and prioritizing a list of things to do, errands to run and appointments to keep.

Feeling of Too Much Responsibility

Feeling like you have too many responsibilities resting on your shoulders strains your patience and tolerance. Take small breaks throughout the day to help relieve this.

Pressure from Unreasonable Deadlines

Feeling overburdened under the weight of impending deadlines can be alleviated by calling in help from family and friends.

Conflict

Identify, clarify, and resolve conflicts to avoid strain. When spiritual, moral or ethical conflicts arise, seek to respectfully collaborate with the other person's viewpoint to gain personal space.

Pressure from Loved One's Demands

When caring for someone, it is easy to feel pressured by their needs and demands. Categorize and prioritize these demands by order of need to help relieve tension.

Feeling Out of Control

Learn where you can begin "letting go" of some of the caregiver workload to help relieve pressure.

Feeling Isolated from Others

Invite trusted others to listen to your needs.

Stress is a natural occurrence along the caregiving journey, as it is in life. Our goal is to not eliminate all stress completely, but to learn how to manage our lives to better cope with stress.

These suggestions may help you to not only survive but thrive in your caregiving situation.

- Analyze your situation by defining what each person needs.
- Find some humor in tense moments.
- Exercise in some way every day, be it deep breathing, walking or aerobics.
- Find a way to carefully diffuse your hot buttons.
- "No" is a complete sentence; "Yes," can mean later.
- Delegate some tasks to others.
- Display some flexibility by changing the way some things are done.
- How you say something is as important as what you say it.

- Turn a misunderstanding into a communication opportunity.
- Smile and say “thank you” often.
- Do some things for yourself: read, listen to music, quiet time alone, call a friend or go out to eat.
- Integrate your faith philosophy into coping with stress with inspirational movies, televised church services, personal meditation and prayer.
- Rely on divine strength to provide care as an act of God’s goodness to your loved one.

Someone anonymously put it this way: “I can stay and continue as things are. I could leave and feel bad because I left the situation to take care of myself. I can stay and do things differently by realigning the expectations. I can decide that care can be done in a different environment.” Life events, tense relationships, or lack of useful, productive activity lead to vulnerability. Medication, healthy coping skills, problem-solving and faith support are good for the loved one and the caregiver alike.