

Taking Care of the Caregiver

More than 1 in 5 Americans have taken on the role of caregiver, having looked after an adult or a kid with special needs. One out of every five Americans is about the equivalent of 53 million adult caregivers (National Alliance for Caregiving [NAC] & American Association of Retired People [AARP], 2020).

The first people who may come to mind when you hear the word caregiver are likely healthcare professionals. However, a caregiver is anyone who assists a friend, family member, or loved one with their social and medical needs. When you help or support someone with one or more tasks like getting dressed, bathing, paying bills, grocery shopping, driving them to doctor's appointments, offering emotional support, or helping them manage a chronic illness (dementia, stroke), you are considered a caregiver. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018).

Providing care for a loved one can improve your relationship with them or offer you a feeling of purpose. But burnout on a physical, emotional, and psychological level could also result from it. As a matter of fact, 1 in 5 caregivers state that they are either in bad health or that they neglect their own medical needs (NAC & AARP, 2020).

If you are experiencing several of the following symptoms, you might be experiencing caregiver burnout:

- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and other loved ones
- Loss of interest in once-enjoyed activities
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Changes in appetite and/or weight

- Changes in sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- A more frequent occurrence of illness
- Irritability, frustration, or anger toward others

(Cleveland Clinic, 2023)

You must take care of yourself to be a caregiver. You can only provide someone with the same level of care that you provide for yourself. How are you able to care for yourself?

- Give attention to your own personal health needs
- Get enough sleep
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly, even for just ten minutes at a time,
- Taking guilt-free breaks
- Finding self-care activities (like reading a book, taking a warm bath, or listening to your favorite music)
- Talk to a trusted friend
- Accept help from others
- Set goals
- Pray

(Family Caregiver Alliance, n.d.).

This is God's promise: "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved." (*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible, 2021, Psalm 55:22*).

What can we do to support our church members who are caregivers?

- Offer emotional and social support
- Arrange a time to check in with them
- Assist with errands, chores, and other responsibilities
- Check whether they are taking care of their own health concerns

(CDC, 2021)

We are offering invaluable respite care when we allow caregivers to take a break from tending to their loved one and give themselves the time and attention they deserve. Even though it will only be for a few hours, we are strengthening their ability to withstand the stress that comes with being a caregiver. So," whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and specially for those of the family of faith." (*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible, 2021, Galatians 6:10*).

References

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Profile

Licensed RN with more than ten years of experience in medical-surgical nursing, current nurse case manager at Sutter Care at Home Roseville

Experience

- Nurse Case Manager, Sutter Care at Home Roseville, March 2022 to present
- Nurse Case Manager, Arias Home Health, Roseville, California, September 2021 - March 2022
- Staff Nurse, Medical-Surgical Nursing, Kaiser Foundation Hospitals; Roseville, California, November 2019-July 2021
- Staff Nurse, Medical-Surgical and Oncology Nursing, Kaiser Foundation Hospitals; San Jose, California, October 2007-November 2019
- Staff Nurse Nurse, Medical- Surgical Nursing, Baylor University Medical Center; Dallas, Texas, February 2004-September 2007
- Clinical Instructor, Adventist University of the Philippines College of Nursing, June 2001-February 2004

Education

- Master of Public Health, Adventist University of the Philippines, March 2000,
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Adventist University of the Philippines, March, 1998

Licenses and Certifications

- Certified Case Manager, Commission on Certification for Case Managers
- Registered Nurse, California Board of Registered Nursing