

take care of yourself

10 ways to be
a healthier caregiver



how to manage stress: 10 ways to be a healthier caregiver

Are you so overwhelmed by taking care of someone else that you have neglected your own physical, mental and emotional well-being? If you find yourself without the time to take care of your own needs, you may be putting your health at risk.

1. Find time for yourself.

Take advantage of respite care so you can spend time doing something you enjoy. Respite care provides caregivers a temporary rest from caregiving, while the person with Alzheimer's continues to receive care in a safe environment. Visit [alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care) to learn more about respite care.

2. Know what community resources are available.

Contact the Alzheimer's Association or use our online **Community Resource Finder** ([alz.org/communityresourcefinder](https://www.alz.org/communityresourcefinder)) to find Alzheimer's care resources in your community. Adult day programs, in-home assistance, visiting nurses and meal delivery are just some of the services that can help you manage daily tasks.



3. Become an educated caregiver.

As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills may be necessary. The Alzheimer's Association offers programs to help you better understand and cope with the behaviors and personality changes that often accompany Alzheimer's. Visit the **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center** at [alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care) to learn more and access care training resources, including free e-learning workshops.

4. Get help and find support.

Seek the support of family, friends and people who can relate to your situation. Use our online **Care Team Calendar** ([alz.org/carecalendar](https://www.alz.org/carecalendar)) to organize family and friends who want to help. Our **24/7 Helpline** ([800.272.3900](tel:8002723900)), **ALZConnected**[®] online social networking community ([alzconnected.org](https://www.alzconnected.org)) and local support groups are good sources for finding comfort and reassurance. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional help.

5. Take care of yourself.

Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you stay healthy will help you be a better caregiver.

6. Manage your level of stress.

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms. Use relaxation techniques that work for you, and talk to your doctor.

7. Accept changes as they occur.

People with Alzheimer's change and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Becoming aware of community resources — from home care services to residential care — should make the transition easier. So will the support and assistance of those around you.

8. Make legal and financial plans.

Plan ahead. Consult a professional to discuss legal and financial issues including advance directives, wills, estate planning, housing issues and long-term care planning. Involve the person with Alzheimer's and family members when possible. Use **Alzheimer's Navigator™** (alz.org/alzheimersnavigator) to help assess your needs and create a customized action plan.

9. You're doing your best.

Know that the care you provide makes a difference and you are doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but individual care needs to change as Alzheimer's progresses. You can't promise how care will be delivered, but you can make sure that the person with Alzheimer's is well cared for and safe.

10. Visit your doctor regularly.

Take time to get regular checkups, and be aware of what your body is telling you. Pay attention to any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness or changes in appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

Caregiver stress daily checkup

How many signs have I experienced today?

- › Denial
- › Anger
- › Social withdrawal
- › Anxiety
- › Depression
- › Exhaustion
- › Sleeplessness
- › Irritability
- › Lack of concentration
- › Health problems

When stress is a concern, contact the Alzheimer's Association at 800.272.3900 for information and support.

10 symptoms of caregiver stress

- 1. Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who's been diagnosed.
I know Mom is going to get better.
- 2. Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's or others, anger that no cure exists or that people don't understand what's happening.
If he asks me that one more time I'll scream!
- 3. Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that once brought pleasure.
I don't care about getting together with the neighbors anymore.
- 4. Anxiety** about facing another day and about the future.
What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?
- 5. Depression** that begins to break your spirit and affects your ability to cope.
I don't care anymore.
- 6. Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks.
I'm too tired for this.
- 7. Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns.
What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?
- 8. Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions.
Leave me alone!
- 9. Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks.
I was so busy, I forgot we had an appointment.
- 10. Health problems** that begin to take a mental and physical toll.
I can't remember the last time I felt good.

Get support

If you experience any of these signs, contact the **Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline** at **800.272.3900** to receive support — day or night — whenever you need it.



alz.org/care

The Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center provides more than 70 pages of information and easy access to resources, including:

- › Caregiver Stress Check — online assessment.
- › Alzheimer's Navigator™ — create customized action plans.
- › Community Resource Finder — find local resources.
- › ALZConnected® — connect with other caregivers who can relate to your situation.
- › Care Team Calendar — organize family and friends who want to help with caregiving.



800.272.3900

24/7 Helpline — available all day, every day.

alzheimer's association®

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's®.

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