

# Managing Caregiver Stress

As a caregiver for someone living with dementia, it is normal to feel stressed or even overwhelmed sometimes. This is especially true as your role and responsibilities change. It can also be hard to put your own health first when you are caring for someone else. But it is important to give yourself the same kindness that you give to others.

By taking care of yourself, you can continue to give good care to the person living with dementia. Know and watch for the warning signs of caregiver stress. If you see them, make a plan to reduce stress and take care of your own well-being. If you notice these signs often, talk to your doctor. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to get worse.

## Tips for reducing stress

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

- » Go for a walk while the person you care for is resting.
- » Make and keep your regular appointments with your doctor.
- » Do some gentle stretches before bed.
- » Get enough sleep by setting a regular bedtime.
- » Eat a healthy snack such as fruit or vegetables.

### MENTAL HEALTH

- » Find relaxation techniques that work for you, like meditation or deep breathing.
- » Call a friend or family member to talk about how you are feeling.
- » Tell your doctor if you are exhausted or overly stressed.
- » Replace a negative thought with a positive one.
- » Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for.

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RESOURCES

- » Look into community resources such as home care services.
- » Attend an Alzheimer's Association® support group or call the Association's 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900).
- » Put together a care team that can assist with caregiving responsibilities.

## Make a plan to reduce stress.

Answer the questions below to help you make a plan to take care of your physical and emotional health.

### A warning sign of caregiver stress I have experienced is:

(Check all that apply)

- Denial.** You might not believe the person has the disease or that it will get worse over time.
- Anger.** You might feel angry or frustrated with the person living with dementia because they can't do the things they used to be able to do.
- Social withdrawal.** You might stay away from friends and activities that used to make you feel good.
- Anxiety.** You might feel anxious about the future and facing another day.
- Depression.** You might feel constant sadness, loss of interest or like your spirit is broken. This can affect how you deal with life.
- Exhaustion.** You might be very tired and have trouble doing necessary daily tasks.
- Problems with sleep.** Your worries might keep you awake at night. Or you might be sleeping too much.
- Irritability.** Your mood might change. This can cause negativity in your responses and actions.
- Lack of focus.** It might be hard to concentrate. This might make it harder to do everyday tasks.
- Health problems.** You might start to have physical problems such as high blood pressure, blurred vision or stomach irritation.

I can tell I'm feeling stressed when I: \_\_\_\_\_

### To address the warning signs of caregiver stress I may be experiencing, I will:

- » Take care of my physical health by: \_\_\_\_\_
- » Take care of my mental health by: \_\_\_\_\_
- » Take advantage of resources by: \_\_\_\_\_