

# Caregiving – Coping with Stress

*The demands that come along with caring for someone else are endless, and often times caregivers lose focus of their own needs when putting someone else's ahead of theirs. The following are tips for reducing the stress that inevitably coincides with taking care of another person.*

- Educate yourself about the illness of the person you are caring for. The more you know the more comfortable you will feel caring for them.
- Don't be afraid to talk about your feelings. A great way to vent is with a support group, through a counselor, or anyone you know that is willing to lend an ear.
- It's important for your health to eat right, get enough sleep, and exercise. These are all things that will improve your mood and keep you healthy. Taking care of yourself first is the most important way to avoid stress.
- Relieve your self of some of the hassles that comes with caregiving by setting priorities and using a date book or calendar. Planning ahead and reminders about what you have to do will only make things easier on you.
- Reward yourself. Participate in activities you enjoy and treat yourself. One of the best investments you can make is indulging in a massage. Massage therapy can relax muscles, ease muscle spasm, increase blood flow to skin and muscles and relieve mental and emotional stress.
- Surround yourself with a positive environment and positive people. Negative attitudes and moods tend to spread, so stay clear and keep a positive outlook. Keep your humor; read a light-hearted book or rent a comedic video. Whenever possible try to find humor in your day to help relieve tension. Laughter helps to relax muscles, relieve pain, and boosts the immune system.
- Be social. Avoid negative people or people who stress you out. Plan outings with friends and keep in touch frequently, this gives you someone to talk to and also surrounds you with people who have an invested interest in your feelings and well being.
- Practice relaxation techniques. Popular techniques include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, visualization, yoga, and tai chi. There are many different ways to master these types of stress relief that you can find to fit you and your lifestyle.
- If caring for elderly, a resource that can aid a caregiver in need of a break is adult day care. Adult day care offers a safe, social, and enjoyable environment for elderly who are no longer independent. This provides a break and relief for caregivers knowing that their patient is in good hands.