

## Equal Care for the Caregiver

Overseeing the well-being of those dearest to us is an innate responsibility we willingly accept, and often we assume the role of caretaker without hesitation. While taking care of someone you love is one of the grandest gestures a person can make, it's important to ensure that your selflessness doesn't come at the price of yourself. With guidance and support from your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** and the helpful tips below, you can maintain the caregiving journey so you and your loved one can have an incredibly rewarding experience.

### Take care of yourself first

Because being there for a loved one is just as much emotional and mental as it is physical – from running additional errands and sacrificing work and personal time, to seeing your loved one in pain or witnessing their declining health – caregiving can take a toll in many ways. To truly be an effective caregiver, it's critical that your own health and well-being are a priority. Make time for what makes you happy, take breaks to refocus and reset in especially stressful moments, and maintain healthy diet, sleep, and social habits.

### Beware of burnout

While it's normal for caregivers to experience increased stress, there are also several stress-related issues that, if left unmanaged, can ultimately lead to burnout. Burnout is more serious and doesn't look or feel the same as ordinary stress, so it's important to recognize the difference and take proper preventive action or get help finding a solution. Here are a just a few examples:

Stress	Burnout
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Trouble sleeping</li><li>– Becoming sick</li><li>– Drinking, smoking, or eating more than usual</li><li>– Feeling resentful</li><li>– Decreasing personal or leisure time</li><li>– Increased irritability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Perpetual exhaustion</li><li>– Frequent illness</li><li>– Exhibiting addictive behaviors</li><li>– Unable to find happiness or fulfillment</li><li>– Neglecting own needs</li><li>– Becoming intolerant/angry with the care recipient</li></ul>

### Seek support

Every caregiving situation is unique, but at some point everyone needs a little help. Whether you've decided that you can no longer do it alone, you're overwhelmed and need a break, or you simply need advice, don't be afraid to ask for – and accept – help. Regularly check in with family and friends who can support you emotionally or offer a hand, join support groups in your community or online, and reach out to your EAP any time, day or night for professional advice and resources.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

**800-222-0364**

TTY: 888-262-7848

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