

Your EAP|Here4TN!

for you and your family

PARTNERS
FOR HEALTH
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

Strive for Balance in Caregiving

Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but also stressful and exhausting. It can be a daily challenge to balance caring for your loved one, your other family members, work responsibilities and yourself.

Today, millions of Americans provide caregiving support to family members who are elderly and/or have chronic illnesses or disabilities. Such conditions can include multiple sclerosis, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other disabilities. These individuals often need help with daily activities such as meals, dressing, bathing, and taking medications.

It's often hard, however, to balance a full set of caregiving responsibilities with everything else in your life. As an employee, parent, spouse or grandparent—as well as caregiver—you are often pulled in many different directions. It can be hard to do everything others want or need you to do. Many caregivers today are “sandwiched” by caring for both an elderly relative and the caregiver's own children in the home.

At times, you might be so focused on the well-being of the person for whom you are caring that you forget about your own needs. It's easy to get overwhelmed sometimes, and the stress can cause illness, anxiety, depression and burnout.

However, by carefully managing your caregiving resources while remembering to take care of yourself in the process, you can better manage the daily challenges of caregiving. ParTNers EAP is here and can assist with:

- Learning to manage and better cope with caregiving stress
- Assist with creating a balance between your caregiving role and other aspects of your life
- Understanding the stages of caregiving
- One-on-one counseling either in person or on the phone
- Assistance with selecting home health aides, assisted living, adult daycare centers and much more. ParTNers EAP offers to research these and more options and provide you with a list.

Call ParTNers EAP anytime, 24/7 at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486).

Life changes in a big way when you become a family caregiver. Your transition to a primary caregiving role may occur in a gradual way or be a sudden development. Whatever the timing or circumstances might be, your new responsibilities can seem overwhelming.

Join us on **May 14 from 1 to 2 p.m. CT** for a webinar focusing on caregiving. Find out tips, tools and resources to help you find a balance, tips for also focusing on your needs and more. To register for the no cost webinar, click here or go to **www.Here4TN.com**.

The **www.HERE4TN.com** website also offers information and tools to keep you and your family healthy. Always remember you can also call toll-free **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) 24/7 to arrange for no-cost, confidential help from a counseling professional. Counseling is available both face-to-face and by phone.



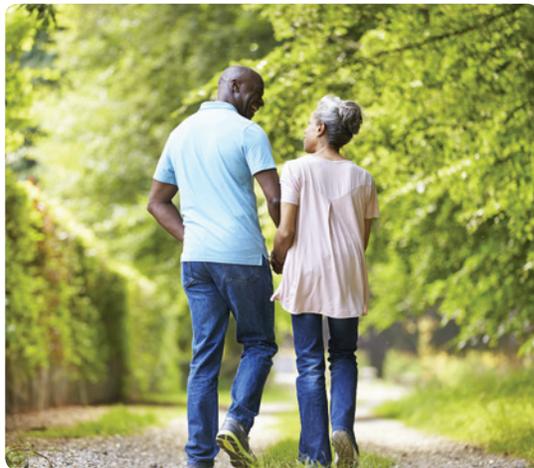
Cut Caregiving Stress: Focus on You

You may be a veteran caregiver, or you may be attempting to get your arms around the scope of caregiving responsibilities for the first time. Regardless of where you are in the caregiving journey, it's important to take good care of yourself.

Look After Your Health

There are some basic steps you can take in order to stay strong as a caregiver. First, always strive to get seven or eight hours of sleep per night. Second, eat a healthy diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Also, limit your intake of alcohol and nicotine.

Try setting aside at least a little time for a workout that suits your lifestyle, whether it's walking, weightlifting, running, water aerobics, bike riding or dancing—whatever you enjoy doing. Exercise helps relieve stress, tension and is good for you. Set up some brief caregiving coverage if needed. And don't skip periodic health checkups with your doctor. ParTNers EAP can also assist if you need someone to talk with either in person or over the phone.



Maintain Supportive Relationships with Family and Friends

Though you may be busy with caregiving tasks, don't isolate yourself. Be sure to share your challenges with friends and family. This can help you be a more relaxed caregiver and prevent you from "burning out."

Be Realistic in What You Can Do

Try to focus on the positive good you're doing, and don't give in to guilt. No one is a perfect caregiver! You're doing the best you can. Make sure you ask for help whenever possible, and don't worry about having to say "no" to outside requests that don't fit your priorities.

Watch for Signs of Stress

Sometimes you're so involved in caring for a loved one that you miss the warning signs of your own stress. This could be trouble sleeping, being angry, irritable, and/or overtired, eating poorly, or losing interest in activities. Physical signs of stress can include frequent headaches and stomachaches, muscle tension and high blood pressure.

Remember that ParTNers EAP offers support and resources that can help. Reach out for assistance, and try to take one day at a time.

Ways to Attain Balance

As a caregiver you might often feel stretched pretty thin. Meeting everyone's needs simultaneously isn't easy. Here are some tips on finding balance.

- **Talk about roles up front.** Good communication within the family, including children, is important. By discussing caregiving issues early on, everyone will be clearer about what is expected of him or her in terms of ongoing caregiving responsibilities.
- **Stay flexible.** Expect care arrangements to change. Some individuals in the family may be willing to take on certain caregiving tasks over time. Examples could include handling driving duties, grocery shopping or preparing meals.
- **Ask for help.** Don't think you need to handle everything alone. Friends, family, and outside professionals and agencies can help. Ask them!
- **Schedule healthy breaks.** Maybe you need a half hour walk each day, or a weekly outing to the movies or dinner with a friend. Perhaps you just need some quiet personal time, even for a short period. Schedule it!
- **Arrange needed time off.** Respite care (in-home or at a center) can give you much-needed time off by providing skilled caregiving coverage. ParTNers EAP can assist with research and will provide options for you and your family.



The Stages of Caregiving

The journey of providing care to a loved one is difficult but also rewarding. While every situation is different, veterans of caregiving have identified a number of stages most caregivers go through.¹ In reviewing these stages, you may see yourself at a particular point. You might also find useful ways to think about caregiving.

I may help a relative soon

You and your loved one realize you may soon begin your caregiving role. You both take steps to prepare for that process. This is the time to get the care recipient's affairs in order.

I am beginning to help

You may begin providing meals and running errands at first. At this time, you should educate yourself on all aspects of your loved one's condition and decide how best to help. Join support groups that focus on specific illnesses or on caregiving in general. Don't go it alone.

I am fully involved in helping

You are providing all aspects of daily care to a loved one. This role is now central in your life. Establish and agree upon a daily routine. Determine limits of care with which the two of you are comfortable. Accept help from family and friends, or hire a respite care provider. Take breaks from your responsibilities. Re-examine your plans for the future.

My role is changing

Your caregiver duties are coming to an end, either because you can no longer continue in your role, or because the care recipient's remaining time is coming to an end. Allow yourself to reflect on shared memories.

My caregiving has ended

You are moving forward in your life now. You are able to look back on your caregiving years with happy thoughts of the one for whom you cared. You can now help and give advice to others who may be starting their own caregiving journey.

1. Adapted from The Caregiving Years by Denise Brown, at Caregiving.com.

Tips for Getting Caregiving Help

Here are some ideas about ways to obtain help with your caregiving responsibilities.

Ask family and friends. Prepare a list of ways friends and family could help you, and let them choose their tasks.

Consider respite care. This can include home health care workers, adult daycare centers, and assisted living or short-term nursing homes.

Learn about community resources. Check out your local senior center, place of worship or hospital to find out what's available.

Look into support groups. A local or online support group can give you caregiving tips from others who are facing the same challenges you are.

Consider using a housekeeper. This can free you up to attend to other priorities.

Use a monitoring device. If needed, a mobility monitor, in-home webcam or emergency response system can help you keep better track of your loved one.

Tap caregiver resources and information. ParTNers EAP can assist with finding resources and programs such as adult daycare, assisted living facilities and more. Call us at 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486) and let us do the research for you. Another helpful resource is the National Alliance for Caregiving (www.caregiving.org).

