

## Caring for the Caregiver

There is no question - being a caregiver is a tough job. Caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, and the most effective way to prevent caregiver burnout is to take care of the caregiver. The following tips will help you, the caregiver, take care of yourself:

- **Set Priorities**
  - ♦ Determine what duties and responsibilities you can handle and those you cannot. Be realistic.
  - ♦ Share these with the family and other supports, highlighting the areas (including days) you'll need help.
- **Reach Out to Others**
  - ♦ Maintain your friendships and continue to reach out to others for support when you need it and social connection.
  - ♦ It may be beneficial to reach out to a professional, such as a social worker or geriatric care manager, if family conflict arises. An outside professional can bring objectivity to a challenging situation.
- **Exercise and Diet**
  - ♦ Regular exercise and a good, nutritious diet do wonders for your overall health. Fit in activity when you can and make it something you like – a short walk, a yoga video or even just some stretching. Eat meals that give you the most nutrition to keep your energy up.
- **Share the Load**
  - ♦ Work with family, friends, and paid caregivers to establish “care teams” so you can take breaks, recharge your battery and share the responsibilities, which can be both physical and emotional.
  - ♦ Even if you can manage all the responsibilities, it is healthier to share them with others.
- **Keep Your Medical Appointments**
  - ♦ It seems obvious, but many caregivers neglect themselves by delaying health screenings and are more vulnerable to depression or substance abuse. Be sure to keep up with your routine preventative health screenings as well as specialist visits.
- **Take Breaks**
  - ♦ Every caregiver needs a break. On a regular basis, take time for yourself to recharge.
  - ♦ Having regular and routine breaks is an essential part of proactive care to prevent burnout.
  - ♦ Schedule a regular "respite care" break through a local homecare agency, hire a private caregiver or ask a friend or neighbor to come to the home to help out while you take a break.
  - ♦ For information on local respite options, go to the [ARCH National Respite Network](#).
- **Make an Emergency Plan**
  - ♦ Having a plan will make a situation less stressful and hectic when something unexpected happens. Although you cannot plan for everything, discussing back-up plans eases some of the worry that accompanies caregiving.

Understanding the potential for burnout, recognizing your limitations, and making a point to care for yourself are all critical parts of the caregiver puzzle. Remember to continue caring for yourself so you can most effectively care for your loved one.