

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

Caregiver stress and burnout can happen when you neglect your own needs.

While caring for an aging parent or loved one can be tremendously rewarding, it can also be physically, financially, and emotionally stressful. Caregivers often report feelings of anxiety, loss of sleep, and diminished personal health. Help from family, friends, professionals, and other community resources can be critical, especially when an aging loved one has dementia, experiences frequent medical crises, is physically disabled, lives at a distance, or has few supports.

Caregiver stress and burnout can happen when you neglect your own needs and feel you have too many responsibilities, such as taking care of other family members and working. It's normal at times to feel angry, guilty, or frustrated, but burnout can lead to health problems and clinical depression. Warning signs of burnout include:

- Persistent feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Mental and physical exhaustion.
- Changes in appetite and/or sleep patterns.
- Irritability and social withdrawal.
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or the person you're caring for.

It can be difficult to ask others for help, especially if you feel you'd be shirking your responsibilities or you're afraid to be judged by others or seen as not being capable. But even the strongest person can become overwhelmed.

Tips for self-care include the following:

- **Take breaks to stay healthy.** Too often caregivers put their own needs last, but tending to your physical and emotional health is critical.
- **Develop a support network.** It's important to have social connections. Consider a caregiver support group or other local resources.
- **Be willing to ask for and accept help.**

