

Self-Care For the Caregiver

Caring for an aging parent, significant other or a loved one with special needs can be an incredibly rewarding experience. For many however, it is also a source of great stress. This stress can lead to feelings of anger and guilt. These feelings can get in the way of successful caregiving, and may even impact your health.

Taking care of yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. It is important to learn that you cannot take care of others unless you take care of yourself as well.

Your Feelings are Important

Many caregivers feel guilty about expressing feelings of anger or resentment. It is very common to have these feelings and it is important that you acknowledge them so that you can seek out the help you need. Here are a few tips on what you can do to help yourself.

- Recognize your limitations.
- Ask for help when it is needed.
- Attend a support group.
- Keep friends and family in your life.
- Communicate your feelings.

Why Accepting Help is Important

There may be many reasons for rejecting help that may be offered from friends and family. You might feel that it is your duty alone to take care of your loved one, or that you don't want to be a burden on others. But, accepting help from others can allow you more time for yourself. In the long run, this will make you a better caregiver. When someone offers help, be specific about what they can do, such as:

- Getting help from a friend with meal preparation can leave you with much needed time for yourself.
- Getting help from a significant other and children with your own household chores such as laundry, dusting, grocery shopping and cleaning bathrooms can help keep your house running smoothly and they will be proud knowing that they are helping.

There is Support for You Out There

Meals-on-wheels programs, in-home care agencies and adult day care programs are only a few of the many support services available when you are taking care of a loved one. Finding appropriate services can be as much an act of caregiving as providing them yourself.

- Find the local Agency on Aging office that services your community. They have a wealth of information on local resources.
- Network with other caregivers to find out what services can be helpful.
- Remember: Allowing help from outside sources is a way to take care of you.

Recharge Yourself

Do you have hobbies or leisure time activities that you don't seem to have time for anymore? Will talking to a counselor or attending a support group meeting help your mood? It is important that you do things you enjoy. Taking care of yourself means replenishing your spirit as well.

- A simple walk around the neighborhood can feel like a mini-vacation.
- Read a book or watch a movie you enjoy.
- Arrange to meet a friend, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Use time away from your caregiving duties to do special things for yourself, not to run errands.

Your Magellan Program is an Important Resource

Log on to www.MagellanHealth.com/member or call your program's toll-free number 800-523-5668 to access information, articles, resources and tools. Your program provides expert help and support on caregiving so that you can get back to enjoying life.