

When Caregivers Face Depression – How To Improve Today's Caregiving Role

The days are long. Often there is no message of "thanks" or "I appreciate you". In fact at times it can be down right difficult to make it through the day.

The life of a caregiver can be all consuming. In fact family caregivers suffer from major depression much more frequently than the rest of the population. Yet when a caregiver suffers, ultimately so does the family member or friend he or she is taking care of.

If you are a caregiver, or have a caregiver in your life, learn to watch for the warning signs of depression. Depression is more than feeling sad, or being unhappy. It's a disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss or frustration last for long periods of time, and actually interfere with everyday life.

Depression is usually triggered by stressful or unhappy life events, and caregiving can play on both. Family caregiving is considered the most stressful experience because of the high emotions and attachment to the patient. Family caregivers caring for a parent experience symptoms of depression twice as often as non-caregivers, and family caregiving spouses experience symptoms six times as often as non-caregivers.

One of the quickest ways of determining whether you are experiencing symptoms of depression is to take a depression-screening test. You can find resources online, such as depression-screening.org, or consult with your physician. Don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help.

As a family caregiver, ask for both emotional and physical help from the beginning. Don't wait until you become overwhelmed. Ask other family members for support, and reach out to your community, such as your church group. The more connected you feel to others, the less isolated you will feel.

Be conscious of what you are capable of. Planning is often one of the best steps to prevention, as it allows you to limit your activities to those things that matter most to you. Don't be afraid to say no, and don't take on more than you can handle. Realize caregiving often takes more time than you imagine, and constantly worrying about other activities will not only add to your stress, but also to your loved one.

If you think you are becoming overwhelmed, or have feelings of depression, start connecting with others. Talk to you doctor and seek medical help. Also reach out to caregiving communicates that can put you in touch with like-minded people. Check with your doctors for local resources, or jump online and join family caregiver discussion groups, such as the boards on National Family Caregivers Association's website nfcacares.org.

Remember to take care of yourself first. You won't be able to care for your loved one if you are sick or in the hospital. Taking care of you is the start of taking care of your loved one.

About the Author

Jonnelle Leimbach is the co-owner and President of Seniors Etc, an in-home caregiver company helping seniors stay in their homes for as long as possible. Seniors Etc currently serves the Denver Metro area in Colorado, and provides a variety of services, including light housekeeping, meal preparation, medication reminders, hospice assist, respite care and companionship. Sign up for our report, How To Tell When Your Family Is Ready For Homecare at SeniorsEtc.com

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