

Hospice Notes: Care for Caregivers

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Caregivers have great responsibilities, and one of the responsibilities that should be at the top of their lists is to maintain their own mental and physical health. You can't provide optimal care if you aren't as healthy as you can be.

YOUR HEALTH

Pace yourself: rest when you can. The needs of hospice patients are likely to increase over time. Ask for assistance if working with a hospice patient is making you feel fatigued. If you don't ask, others may assume you don't need help.

Fatigue can affect your mood and general outlook. Exercising briefly can increase your energy and act as an outlet for feelings like frustration.

Don't forget that a resident on hospice can have a volunteer to provide companionship when you don't want the resident to feel alone. This can give you a much needed break. Talk with the hospice social worker if you think the resident could benefit from visits by volunteers.

EATING FOR YOUR HEALTH

Sometimes when we are very busy we cut corners when it comes to caring for ourselves. You need to eat healthy to stay healthy. Keep high quality, nutritious foods around that need little or no preparation (think fruit). Eat slowly and try to stay away from too much junk food.

(Although can it be a coincidence that the word "stressed" spelled backwards is "desserts"?)

Drive slowly, listen to relaxing music or treat yourself to a massage when you are feeling stressed.

YOUR NEEDS

You may not be able to eliminate the causes of stress right now, but you can work to manage the stress in a healthy way.

Set limits on what you are willing and able to do. Get anger out by writing in a journal, exercising or pretending to tell off your boss when you are alone in the car. You may even want to have a good cry.



The support of others is a great stress reducer. Talk with friends, other caregivers, or the hospice nurse or social worker.

There are relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation and visualization that are easily learned. There are recordings you can buy to help you with this.

A sense of humor can help get you through some tough times. Treat yourself and the resident to laughs and hugs whenever you can. Cuddling pets is another excellent way to decrease stress.

Thought for the Day

"The greatest weakness of most humans is their hesitancy to tell others how much they love them while they're alive."

-- [Orlando A. Battista](#)

REFRESH YOUR SPIRIT

Most of us need spiritual as well as physical and emotional renewal. You may find it helpful to visit your place of worship, listen to tapes of services, or read or listen to inspirational messages. You may want to set aside some quiet moments for prayer or reflection.

You may also find that taking a quiet walk outside or working in a garden calms you and reconnects you with things you value. For some, yoga helps. Allow yourself to daydream.

BURNOUT

Being aware of the sources and symptoms of stress is important so you can prevent burnout. Although signs of burnout vary from one person to another, here are some of the most common to watch for:

- Physical—Continual exhaustion, inability to get enough rest, susceptibility to illnesses and frequent accidents.
- Emotional—Impatience, irritability, forgetfulness, inability to experience enjoyment.
- Coping—Denial of burnout symptoms, increased compulsive or addictive behavior (like smoking or drinking), fewer social contacts, discontinuing hobbies or recreational activities.

Do something today to care for your mind, body or spirit.

For more information about hospice call Pathways Home Health & Hospice, 888.755.7855 or visit our website: www.pathwayshealth.org