



Caring for a Spouse or Partner

Giving care to a disabled or ill spouse or partner is one of the most difficult challenges a person may face. Besides providing practical care in the case of chronic illness, you may have to face the fact that your loved one will never be the same again.

Get Things Off Your Chest

When your spouse is chronically ill, you may find yourself overwhelmed with anger and grief at the loss of an intimate relationship. At the same time, you may feel guilty or ashamed for having these feelings, but your responses are quite normal. It may help to explore your feelings with a friend or counselor. Once you get things off your chest, you'll be better able to get on with the work of caregiving.

Understand Your Partner's Abilities

While your partner may have mental or physical limitations, he or she also may have many abilities intact after an illness or accident. Learn what your partner can do and encourage full use of his or her abilities.

Get Help With Practical Matters

There are many practical aspects to caregiving, including financial and legal matters. Your healthcare provider, community agencies and support groups can refer you to resources and individuals who can help you with these issues.



Take time out from the emotional demands of caregiving to take care of yourself.

Join Support Groups

You can gain a lot of support and practical tips from others who are caring for their spouses or partners. If friends or family members offer to help, graciously accept.

Investigate Flextime

Ask your employer about alternative scheduling options that can help you meet both your caregiving and work responsibilities.

Use Professional Caregiving Services

Investigate respite care and adult day care programs, which often include therapy, activities, meals and health care. Use in-home care services, including skilled nursing, personal care and housekeeping services. Most communities have meals-on-wheels programs for older adults. Call social service agencies, home health agencies, home care agencies and transportation systems for referrals. Home maintenance and repair services also can take some of the load off your shoulders.

Nourish Yourself

Take time out from the emotional demands of caregiving to take care of yourself. See a movie or visit friends. If you feel overwhelmed by the emotional concerns of caregiving, a professional counselor may help you cope.