

alzheimer's  association®

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND
MANAGE CAREGIVER STRESS



10 COMMON SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

- 1. Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed.
I know Mom is going to get better.
- 2. Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's or frustration that he or she can't do the things they used to be able to do.
He knows how to get dressed — he's just being stubborn.
- 3. Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that used to make you feel good.
I don't care about visiting with the neighbors anymore.
- 4. Anxiety** about the future and facing another day.
What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?
- 5. Depression** that breaks your spirit and affects your ability to cope.
I just don't care anymore.
- 6. Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks.
I'm too tired for this.
- 7. Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns.
What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?
- 8. Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions.
Leave me alone!
- 9. Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks.
I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.
- 10. Health problems** that begin to take a mental and physical toll.
I can't remember the last time I felt good.

10 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS AND BE A HEALTHIER CAREGIVER

Are you so overwhelmed by taking care of someone else that you have neglected your own physical, mental and emotional well-being? If you find yourself not taking care of your own needs, you may be putting your health at risk.

1. Find time for yourself.

Consider taking advantage of respite care so you can spend time doing something you enjoy. Respite care provides caregivers with a temporary rest from caregiving, while the person with Alzheimer's disease continues to receive care in a safe environment. Visit [alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care) to learn more.

2. Know what community resources are available.

Contact the Alzheimer's Association® or use our online **Community Resource Finder** ([alz.org/CRF](https://www.alz.org/CRF)) to locate dementia care resources in your area. Adult day programs, in-home assistance, companions and meal delivery are just some of the services that can help you manage daily tasks.

3. Become an educated caregiver.

As the disease progresses, it may become necessary to adopt new caregiving skills. The Alzheimer's Association offers programs to help you better understand and cope with common behavioral and personality changes that may occur. Visit the **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center** at [alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care) to learn more and access care training resources, including free online workshops.

4. Get help and find support.

Our **24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)**, **ALZConnected**[®] online social networking community (**alzconnected.org**) and local support groups (**alz.org/findus**) are all good sources for finding comfort and reassurance. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek help from a doctor or counselor.

5. Take care of yourself.

Try to eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you are healthy can help you be a better caregiver.

6. Manage your level of stress.

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms and discuss with a doctor, as needed. Try to find relaxation techniques that work for you.

7. Accept changes as they occur.

People with Alzheimer's disease change over time and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Becoming aware of community resources — from home care services to residential care — can make the transition easier. So will the support and assistance of those around you.

8. Make legal and financial plans.

Putting legal and financial plans in place after an Alzheimer's diagnosis is important so that the person with the disease can participate in decision-making. Having future plans in place can provide comfort to the entire family. Many documents, including advance directives, can be prepared without the help of an attorney. However, if you are unsure about how to

complete legal documents or make financial plans, you may want to seek assistance from an attorney specializing in elder law, a financial advisor who is familiar with elder or long-term care planning, or both.

9. Know you're doing your best.

Remember that the care you provide makes a difference and that you are doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but individual care needs change as Alzheimer's progresses. You can't promise how care will be delivered, but you can make sure that the person with the disease is well cared for and safe.

10. Visit your doctor regularly.

Take time to get regular checkups, and be aware of what your body is telling you. Pay attention to any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness or changes in appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

CAREGIVER STRESS CHECKUP

Do you experience any of these signs of stress?

- » Denial
- » Exhaustion
- » Anger
- » Sleeplessness
- » Health problems
- » Irritability
- » Social withdrawal
- » Lack of concentration
- » Depression
- » Anxiety

Call **800.272.3900** or visit **alz.org** for caregiver information and support.



alz.org/care

The Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center provides reliable information and easy access to resources, including:

- » Alzheimer's Navigator® – Assess your needs and create customized action plans of information and support.
- » Community Resource Finder – Find local resources.
- » ALZConnected® – Connect with other caregivers who can relate to your situation.



alz.org/findus

We're in communities across the country.



800.272.3900

24/7 Helpline – Available all day, every day.
(TTY: 866.403.3073)

alzheimer's  association®

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease®.

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