



Caregiver Burnout

I want to take a moment to recognize those folks that are not only caring for themselves, but are caregivers for others. You are the people on the front line who have to play multiple roles, and may have added a few more as isolation sets in. You may be so overwhelmed that you are not thinking of yourself. You are not being selfish when you try to take care of yourself. However, all of the demands that are placed on caregivers can cause stress. A 2018 study by the Genworth Insurance Company showed that 53% of caregivers experienced stress, while 41% experienced depression, mood swings, and resentment – and that was without the extra anxiety brought on by the coronavirus pandemic!

How do you know if you are experiencing caregiver stress and burnout?

I have combined symptoms provided by the Mayo Clinic and the Alzheimer's Association:

- Anger and/or frustration
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Denial
- Depression/sadness
- Exhaustion/feeling tired
- Sleeplessness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Inability to concentrate
- Health problems

- Gaining/losing weight
- Headaches or other physical problems
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Social withdrawal
- Losing interest in activities

Some of these may be exacerbated in the time of social distancing. Take good stock of your feelings. If you are finding yourself experiencing any of these symptoms much of the time, reach out for help. Even if you don't have many of these symptoms, take some time for self-care. Here are some things that you can do, even under terms of isolation:

Give yourself a break.

Yes, even in isolation, it is possible to take a break! Take a walk, watch a movie, or meditate. Focus on the things that you can do.

Join a virtual support group.

If you have a Facebook account, there are a number of groups that you can join. If not, there are other groups that give you an opportunity to promote positive relationships or seek social support that don't require you to leave the house. Here are some options:

- Facebook groups
 - Caregivers Connect: <https://www.aplaceformom.com/blog/the-difference-online-caregiving-support-groups-can-make/>
 - Caring for Elderly Parents: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/113354218750970/>
 - Caring for a Spouse with Dementia: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/275900859414999/>
 - Caring for a Family Member with Dementia: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/672984902717938>
 - Memory People, for those with dementia or caring for those with dementia: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/180666768616259>
 - Sandwich Generation, for those caring for children and elderly parents: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/659519127405730/>
 - Working Daughter, for working women balancing caregiving: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/workingdaughter/>
- Other Online Groups
 - AARP Online Community: <https://community.aarp.org/t5/Caregiving/bd-p/bf41?intcmp=AE-HF-IL-COMM-CG>
 - CareGiving.com: <https://www.caregiving.com/activity/>
 - Family Caregiving Alliance, a listserv open to any caregivers: <https://www.caregiver.org/support-groups>

Take care of your own health.

I have heard (and used) the saying, “when you are up to your neck in alligators, it's hard to remember that your original objective was to drain the swamp. Sadly, the statistics for caregivers are not good – they do

not look after their own health needs. Don't be a statistic – take care of yourself. If you are ill, see a doctor, either in his/her office, or virtually.