

THE BALM
IN GILEAD
INC.

Sunday Morning

HEALTH CORNER

Caregivers Need Care Too: Supporting Those Who Serve Others



Caregivers do a lot for others and, because there is so much on their plate, they typically put self-care on the back burner. While the sacrifices of caregiving can provide a sense of fulfillment, the demands of caring for someone else can put physical and emotional strain on even the most resilient person. This is why prioritizing self-care is essential in this role.

Navigating Self-Care as a Caregiver

Caregiving can be challenging both for the caregiver and the person receiving the care. Between life sacrifices, adjustments, and balancing work and family life to make time for these new responsibilities, it's easy to neglect your own health.

Caregivers are less likely than others to prioritize preventative health services like routine checkups, and tend to have a higher risk of physical and mental health issues—sleep problems, high blood pressure, etc. They're even at an increased risk for premature death. This is why taking care of yourself is one of the most important things you can do while navigating your role as a caregiver, as you can't pour from an empty cup.

Signs of Caregiver Stress

- Having trouble sleeping or sleep deprivation
- Feelings of loneliness or hopelessness
- Frequent headaches, body pain, or other physical problems
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- Skipping personal hygiene care such as showers or brushing your teeth
- Disconnecting from others
- Feeling anxious, exhausted or overwhelmed
- Neglecting exercise or balanced meals
- Misusing alcohol or drugs

Asking For Help

Accepting help isn't always easy, but many caregivers wish they had asked for more support before becoming completely overwhelmed. Here are some tips for supporting caregivers.

- **Emotional Support.** One of the best ways to help a caregiver is by lending a listening ear.
- **Offer Practical Help.** Rather than offering vague statements like "let me know if I can help," try being specific by offering to assist with errands, chores, meals or daily tasks.
- **Give Them a Break.** Offer to step in for a few hours to give them a break to relax or run errands.
- **Remind Them to Take Care Of Themselves.** Encourage them to make their health a priority by seeing a doctor or mental health professional if they seem overwhelmed.



The mission of **The Balm In Gilead, Inc.** is to improve the health of individuals who are most at risk for chronic and acute diseases by supporting faith and community organizations in areas that mobilize and strengthen their capacity to increase awareness in areas of prevention, treatment and access to care through education, programming and advocacy. Learn more at balmingilead.org.

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