

Six Ways to Care for Yourself When Caring for Someone with Dementia

Caregiving for someone with dementia can be overwhelming. It involves not only strenuous physical tasks but also managing financial matters, organizing care, and so much more. If you are in this situation, you may be feeling frustrated, isolated, stressed, overwhelmed, or all of the above. These feelings are perfectly normal! But when ignored, they can be harmful to both yourself and others. Caregiver risk factors - such as being subject to high stress, isolation, and lacking social support – increase the likelihood of abuse for older adults with dementia. We all deserve the ability to participate fully in our daily life and in our society. Here are six ways to ensure both of your well-being:

❑ #1 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Take breaks when you can.
- Call a loved one or sit quietly outside.
- Join a support group in your area.
- Know when you've reached your limit.

❑ #2 ASK FOR HELP

- Seek help from family members.
- Make use of support services such as respite care, home delivered meals, adult day care, and case management.
- Hire a personal care attendant or homemaker.

❑ #3 LEARN TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

- Observe behaviors of the person you are caring for and discuss problems with a professional.
- Learn more about dementia and ways to respond to difficult behaviors.

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#4 IDENTIFY “STRESS TRIGGERS”

- Know the aspects of caregiving that are particularly stressful.
- Stay in tune with your body and pick up on physical and behavioral symptoms of stress.

#5 LEARN ABOUT ELDER ABUSE

- Learn about the different types of elder abuse, warning signs of abuse, and tips on preventing abuse from happening.
- To learn more, visit the National Center on Elder Abuse website at:
<https://ncea.acl.gov/faq/index.html>

#6 SPEAK UP! IT IS UP TO ALL OF US TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS ABUSE

- Inform your family members, friends about elder abuse risk factors and solutions so we can all do our part to prevent and address abuse.
- Report suspected abuse of an older person to the local Adult Protective Services Agency or Long-term Care Ombudsman Program.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR HELP?

Adult Protective Services:

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program:

Community Based Organization:

Aging and Disability Resource Center:

Alzheimer’s Association 24 Hour HELPLINE: 800-272-3900

This project was supported in part by grants from the Robert Chinn Foundation and the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.



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Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves inflicting emotional pain, anguish, or distress on an older person through verbal or nonverbal acts.

Emotional abuse may include:

- Shouting and bullying;
- insults or name calling;
- threats of violence or abandonment;
- intimidation or belittling;
- humiliation;
- harassment;
- treating an older person like a child; or
- isolating an older person from their family, friends, and/or community.

We all have a responsibility for preventing and addressing abuse. If you are experiencing emotional abuse, the resources below can help you. If you are not experiencing emotional abuse, learning more about it can help you identify family, friends or others who may be experiencing it, you can share these resources to help them.

Signs of emotional abuse may include an older person:

- being more upset than usual;
- sharing unexplained feelings of hopelessness, guilt, shame, or inadequacy;
- withdrawing from family, friends, and their community;
- seeming uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of certain people;
- being reluctant to speak about the situation;
- an older person's report that neglect has occurred.

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PREVENT EMOTIONAL ABUSE FROM HAPPENING.

Do not stay silent!

Emotional abuse is not fate, and it is okay to ask for help. Everyone has a right to be safe! Learn the signs of abuse. Prevent social isolation by supporting community centers, public transit and empowering older people.

In case of emergency, call 911

Programs, such as Adult Protective Services (APS) and The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program are here to help. Don't be afraid! Talk with a professional you trust from to help you make a report or access more information.

Learn more!

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Neglect

Neglect is when a caregiver does not fulfill their commitment to providing for the physical, emotional, and social needs of an older person they are providing care to. The caregiver may be a paid professional, a family member, neighbor, friend, or other unpaid person caring for an older adult.

Neglect may include a caregiver failing to provide:

- adequate food and water, leading to malnutrition and dehydration;
- sufficient care, such as health care, medications, bathing, dressing, toileting, and changing bandages;
- supervision to ensure safety;
- disregarding a person's financial obligations such as failing to pay rent or mortgage, medical expenses, bills, or property taxes;
- appropriate care when away from the older person; or
- sanitary and safe living conditions.

We all have a responsibility for preventing and addressing neglect. If you are experiencing neglect, the resources below can help you. If you are not experiencing neglect, learning more about it can help you identify family, friends, or others who may be experiencing it and sharing resources to help them.

Signs of neglect may include:

- dehydration or malnourishment;
- untreated bedsores or other medical problems;
- unsanitary or unsafe household conditions;
- a housing eviction notice for unpaid rent;
- an older person seeming uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of certain people;
- being reluctant to speak about the situation; or
- an older person's report that neglect has occurred.

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Prevent neglect from happening by:

- accessing caregiver resources, such as respite care or caregiver support groups;
- utilizing community resources, such as home delivered meals and senior centers; and,
- asking family and friends to help share in the physical, emotional, and social care needs of an older person.

Do not stay silent!

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