

Tips for balancing caregiving and mental health

While caregiving for a loved one can be rewarding, it can take a toll on the caregiver's emotional and physical health, resulting in anxiety and depression.

Caregiving takes many forms, including assisting with activities of daily living, such as bathing and dressing, paying bills, supplying transportation, and providing emotional support. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [22.3% of adults](#) reported providing unpaid or informal care or assistance to a friend or family member in the past 30 days. One in three of these caregivers provided at least 20 hours of care per week, and more than half of them had provided care or assistance for at least 24 months.

According to [research commissioned by The Cigna Group](#), people who provide unpaid assistance or care to others are more likely to feel lonely, drained, and left out than the general population. They also lack companionship and experience difficulty meeting the financial challenges of caregiving. All these factors can diminish vitality, which is the capacity to pursue life with health, strength, and energy.

Fortunately, caregivers can take the following measures to help their loved ones while balancing their own mental health needs.

1. Get organized

Compile all the information your loved one is comfortable sharing with you, including their date of birth, Social Security number, medical history (including prescription drugs), doctors, health insurance card(s), and financial records such as bills, bank accounts, and life insurance policies.

2. Build a community

Take advantage of opportunities to learn from and connect with other caregivers, whether in person or virtually. This can provide you with a safe and supportive environment to share your frustrations and concerns. You can find stories and tips from caregivers who also hold jobs with The Cigna Group [here](#).

3. Plan for the future

Talk with your loved one about their wishes and goals regarding their health. This may include developing documents like a [living will](#), a [power of attorney](#), and a [last will and testament](#). Some Medicare Advantage plans [provide resources to assist customers in creating these critical documents](#), which will make decision-making much easier during difficult times. And

remember, you will need proper documentation to represent your loved one with his or her insurer or provider before you can obtain information or have financial discussions.

4. Prioritize your own health

Maintain your own well-being by participating in activities outside of caregiving that provide respite, such as exercise, meditation, hobbies, and socializing with friends and family. Also, make sure to keep your own medical appointments and stay up to date with your health provider's recommended plan of care, including taking prescribed medications and receiving recommended vaccinations.

5. Ask for help

Reach out to family members and friends when you need help. If your loved one has a Medicare Advantage plan, resources may be available to help both of you, including caregiver support, adult day care, and transportation to and from medical appointments. Additional resources are often available in your community and online.

"Caregiving can be heroic work," said Dr. J.B. Sobel, chief medical officer for Cigna Healthcare's Medicare business. "But it is also very demanding on the caregivers, so it's important that we take care of those people who are taking care of our most vulnerable population. If you know a caregiver, do what you can to support them, even if it's just recognizing their work and thanking them for caring for others."

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