

TIPS

for Caregivers

More than 65 million Americans are caregivers for a loved one. The physical and emotional demands that are involved with being a caregiver can take their toll. However, you can find a balance between providing care and managing your own life by following these tips.

Delve into your role. Learn as much as you can about your family member's illness and about how to be a caregiver. The more knowledgeable that you are about your responsibilities, the more effective you will be in providing care, which can help lessen anxiety.

Nix the guilt. You may feel guilty for not being a better caregiver, but do not give in to guilt. Rather, remember that you are doing the best that you can at any given time. Remember also that no one is a perfect caregiver.

Encourage independence. Being a caregiver does not mean doing everything for your loved one. Remain open to strategies and technologies that allow your family member to be as independent as possible.

Look after your health. People who care for others must first take care of themselves. Keep doctor and dentist appointments as scheduled. Also, keep abreast of your own medical therapy and prescriptions.

Keep up your strength. Developing heart-healthy eating patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet, may help protect the brain and is good for overall health. A Mediterranean



diet includes a sparing amount of red meat and focuses on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, nuts, olive oil, and other healthy fats.

Recharge your batteries. It is normal to need a reprieve from your caregiving duties. Look into respite care for your loved one to allow yourself time to take care of yourself.

Get social. Stay emotionally connected with friends and family by carving out time for socializing each week. Many people have identified maintaining a strong support system as a key to managing the stress that can be associated with caregiving.

Tap into your resources. Whether online or face-to-face, support groups for caregivers can be a source of encouragement. If the person that you are caring for has a rare disease, there may not be enough people for a local group, but there will always be enough people online to assist you.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

