

Taking Care of the Caregiver

Caring for Yourself is First Priority!

Remember -- 1/3 of caregivers die before the person they are caring for because they have not taken care of *themselves* first!

Steps in Establishing and Maintaining 'Boundaries'

Set realistic goals for yourself and your loved one. Much stress is self-induced- especially when you feel you "should" be able to do this or you "ought" to do it. You feel guilty when you can't be perfect and expectations are not met. "Should" and "ought" have no basis in reality-allow yourself to be human. This is what your loved one needs most of all.

Learn to say "NO" to others and to yourself. "No" is a life-saving word-it literally can preserve you and your loved one. It is OK to say, "No, I can't do that" -good people say "no", too.

Accept the fact that you cannot and should not do, or solve, everything.

It is often difficult to accept that we can't fix everything or do everything. Many things have no solutions or explanations. The world is full of unexplainable things. You're not expected to have all the answers.

Talk to yourself using positive statements. Remind yourself of all the things you are doing-if you can't do anything about a situation, remind yourself that it's a waste of energy to get upset about it. Tell yourself it's OK not to be able to do everything. Let go of things you really cannot do and refer them to someone who can. Let go of those that really don't matter-decide what's really important, do that, and let the rest go.

Have someone to talk to. It helps to talk with someone who will listen and not judge you. Be each other's support system-the benefit is in talking about it.

Accept the fact that all emotions are OK.. Emotions are part of being human and are meant to be felt and expressed. Saying how you feel is satisfying and reduces stress. Talking about your feelings is OK-how you act on them can be OK or not OK.

Take care of yourself. Many people depend on you and need you. If you give everything you have without replenishing yourself, soon you'll have nothing left to give. By taking care of yourself, you're taking care of those who depend on you. Taking care of yourself is not selfish, it is essential!

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