



## the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Caregiving Stress**

Caring for another person can easily turn into a lifestyle, rather than a job title. An estimated 52 million Americans are often so busy performing their daily caregiving tasks for others, such as grocery shopping, transportation, housework, preparing meals, managing finances, bathing, and administering medicines that they often forget to check in with themselves and assess their own emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Caring for another person is hard and tiring work. Too frequently, little thought is given to the ability of the caregiver to deal with the burden of caring for a person in need, especially over a long period of time. In fact, a survey conducted by researchers at Indiana University reported that the longer a person cared for a sick relative, the more likely they were to suffer depression, insomnia, and even physical difficulties, such as climbing stairs and/or lifting heavy objects.

### **Signs & Symptoms of Caregiving Burnout**

- **Withdrawing from friends, and family**
- **No longer participating in activities you enjoy**
- **Feeling irritable and hopeless**
- **Finding yourself getting upset more quickly than normal**
- **Changes in appetite and weight**
- **Changes in sleep patterns**
- **Getting sick more often**
- **Feeling like you can't take one more day**
- **Fantasizing about escape**
- **Feeling like you want to hurt yourself or the person you are caring for**

Although caregiving is a lifestyle that both men and women become involved in, some surveys suggest that the typical caregiver is a 46 year-old working woman who spends 18 hours a week on average tending to the needs of the typical care recipient.

Many studies show that caregiver burnout occurs when caregivers don't get the help that truly need. It is then that caregivers begin to experience stress and depression, and are unable to provide the quality of care they are capable of giving. In fact, the Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center reports that working caregivers are especially prone to headaches, weight changes, frequent anxiety, and depression.

The National Family Caregivers Association found that heavy-duty caregivers, especially spousal caregivers, do not get consistent help from other family members. In fact, one study found that as many as three-fourths of caregivers are going it alone.

Heidi Larew, P.C., a therapist in the intensive treatment services department at Portage Path Behavioral Health says that if you know a stressed-out caregiver, you should:

**Help alleviate their stress by asking the caregiver if they need anything and responding helpfully.**

**Provide the caregiver with telephone numbers that specialize in stress-relieving techniques.**

**Offer to sit with the individual they care for, while the caregiver spends some time alone.**



# Can A Counselor Help A Stressed-Out Caregiver?

It is very important that all caregiver monitor their own health. Otherwise, a stressed-out or depressed caregiver will be unable to provide quality care to themselves, or to the person they are caring for. A professional counselor can help caregivers cope with a variety of emotions, such as stress, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, frustration, or competing personal, work and family demands. Mental health professionals can help a caregiver better understand what they are feeling and offer support that family and friends are unable to provide.

However, before beginning treatment for either concern, a caregiver should have a complete physical examination and a medical history review to rule out other causes for the symptoms being experienced. Treatment for stressed-out caregivers often mimics treatment for depression, and usually involves a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication. It is often a good idea to become involved in a caregiver support group. Support groups can help you meet others with similar dilemmas, along with helpful community resources and other useful medical information.



## Tips on How To Care for the Caregiver

- by the How To Care: Home Care web site at ([www.howtocare.com](http://www.howtocare.com))

- Use your informal care network. Ask relatives, friends or neighbors for help with specific tasks and errands.
- Join a caregiver support group for emotional support, practical information and to have a safe place to express and share your thoughts and feelings.
- Look after your own health. Eat properly. Exercise regularly. Schedule regular check-ups and discuss any health problems with your family doctor.
- Seek professional help, if you notice signs of depression.
- Spend time alone for rest and relaxation.
- Stay in touch with friends, if not in person, then at least by telephone.
- Seek out opportunities for respite care - at home, in day programs, or short-term stay facilities.
- Take advantage of any workplace programs that might help you balance your caregiving responsibilities against your work, health or family obligations and /or provide potential sources of funding for home care, including respite.

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

<b>Web Site</b>	<a href="http://www.portagepath.org">www.portagepath.org</a>
<b>Appointments</b>	330-253-3100 800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

<b>Support Hotline</b>	330-434-9144 888-434-8878
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