

Resources

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

- Region 1 Maricopa County**
Area Agency on Aging
1366 E. Thomas Rd., Ste. 108
Phoenix, AZ 85014
(602) 264-4357
- Region 2 Pima County**
Pima Council on Aging
8467 E. Broadway
Tucson, AZ 85710
(520) 790-7262
- Region 3 Apache, Coconino, Navajo & Yavapai Counties**
Northern Arizona Council of Government
119 E. Aspen Ave.
Flagstaff, AZ 86001-5296
(928) 774-1895
- Region 4 La Paz, Mohave & Yuma Counties**
Western Arizona Council of Governments
224 S. 3rd Ave.
Yuma, AZ 85364
(928) 782-1886
- Region 5 Gila/Pinal County**
Pinal/Gila Council for Senior Citizens
1895 N. Trezell Rd., Ste. 2
Casa Grande, AZ 85222
(520) 836-2758
- Region 6 Cochise, Graham, Greenlee & Santa Cruz Counties**
South Eastern Arizona Government Org.
118 Arizona Street
Bisbee, AZ 85603
(520) 432-5301
- Region 7 Navajo Nation**
Navajo Area Agency on Aging
PO Box Drawer 1390
Administration Bldg. #2
Window Rock, AZ 86515
(928) 871-6868, (928) 871-6536
- Region 8 Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona**
Area Agency on Aging
2214 N. Central Ave. Ste. 100
Phoenix, AZ 85004
(602) 258-4822

Websites

- There are now hundreds of Internet sites with information on caregiving. Some are operated by non-profit organizations, others are operated by businesses such as homecare agencies. A few are listed below:
- www.agenet.com**
Eldercare network site that lists resources for elders and family members. Provides a variety of resources, information on products and self-administered assessment tools.
- www.alz.org**
National website to Alzheimer's Association, provides information on Alzheimers disease and related disorders.
- www.alzaz.org**
Local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, with information on the three Arizona chapters, Northern Arizona, Central Arizona and Southern Arizona and information on local activities, support groups and projects.
- www.alzwell.com**
Information, education and support to family or friends caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias.
- www.alzheimers.org**
ADEAR: Alzheimers Disease Education And Referral Center is a service of the National Institute on Aging. Information specialists are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. till 5:00 P.M. Eastern time. The website includes a guide for caregivers of people with Alzheimers Disease.
1-800-438-4380.

AARP

- www.aarp.org/statepages/az.html**
The nation's leading organization for people over the age of 50. The organization has produced a variety of publications on caregiving, many of which are available on its website. These include A Caregiver Guide of Information and Resources (Document # D16697).
- Arizona State Office
302 North First Ave. Ste. 410
Phoenix, AZ 85003
(602) 256-2277
Fax: (602) 256-2928
- Tucson Information Center
5055 E. Broadway, Ste. B-105
Tucson, AZ 85711
(520) 571-9884
Fax: (520) 571-9832

www.centerdoar.org

Generations provides support and information to caregivers, including coordination of support groups, seminars and workshops, and information to access other resources in the community.

www.aoa.gov

Administration on Aging website, provides information specific to the National Family Caregiver Support Program and related articles.

www.CAPS4caregivers.org

Children of Aging Parents (CAPS) is a non-profit organization that provides information and referral services and educational outreach through the website, a toll free help line, support groups, a newsletter and order site for various resources on caregiver issues.

www.caregiver.org

Family Caregiver Alliance site provides links to other sites.

www.eldercare.gov

Eldercare Locator is a nationwide toll-free service helping older adults and their caregivers to find local services. Information Specialists are available Monday through Friday from 9 AM till 8 PM Eastern time.
1-800-677-1116

www.nofec.org

National Organization for Empowering Caregivers

www.de.state.az.us

DES Aging and Adult Administration, National Family Caregiver Support Program.
(602) 542-4446

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Preventing
STRESS
from Becoming
Harmful

Arizona
Caregivers
Continuing the Cycle



A Guide for Caregivers





Caring for a sick or disabled elderly family member can be deeply enriching and personally fulfilling experience. It is a time for sharing memories and offering comfort. For some, it offers a rare opportunity to spend extended time with a loved one.

But the responsibility and challenges of caregiving can be overwhelming. Watching a loved one decline, experience pain or discomfort, or act in unfamiliar ways can be disturbing. Caring for an ill elderly family member can be physically demanding and exhausting; it can leave caregivers feeling overwhelmed, frustrated or fearful. If the relationship between a caregiver and an ill family member was poor to begin with, caregiving can aggravate tensions or cause resentment. Some caregivers feel guilty that they're not doing enough, while others fear that they will lash out or harm the person for whom they provide care.

Caregivers,

- Do you ever feel like you've reached your limit?
- Are you plagued by guilt that you're not doing everything you should be doing, or that you're not doing it well enough?
- Are you constantly exhausted, depressed, overeating or drinking too much?
- Do you feel that other family members aren't doing their share?
- Do you find yourself cutting corners because you're too tired or overwhelmed to do everything you think you should?
- Have you ever worried that you might lash out at your ill family members?

Although seldom talked about, these feelings aren't unusual, but, they are a warning that it's time to get help. When ignored, negative feelings can lead to stress, burnout, depression and health problems. They can even lead to abuse or neglect.

Here are some things you can do:

Join a Support Group

Support groups provide caregivers with an opportunity to share experiences, insights and ideas. Just knowing that you're not alone can bring relief. Developing relationships with other caregivers has actually been shown to reduce stress and relieve fears about lashing out. Many social service agencies and organizations offer groups. For the computer-savvy, there are online "virtual" support groups.

Make Use of Social Services

Community services are available to help with just about everything you or your family member needs, from legal assistance to help preparing meals. Unfortunately, finding services can sometimes be frustrating, especially if you or the person you care for has limited financial resources. Publicly financed services and financial assistance may be available to those who qualify. A good place to find out about resources in your community is your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), which can usually be found in the city or county government section of the telephone directory under "Aging Services" or "Social Services." You can also get the number from the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116.

The following are just a few of the services that are available in most communities:

Respite means relief, and respite care comes in many forms. Agency employees or volunteers may come to your home to give you a break. Some programs will arrange for your family member to come to an adult day center for several hours a day. Still others can accommodate older people in a supervised setting, such as a nursing home, for several days.

Support services can ease caregivers' load. They include in-home attendants, transportation, home delivered meals and many more.

Assessments can pinpoint what activities your older family member has trouble with and identify ways to help. Getting an unbiased assessment can help ensure that your family member gets everything they need without paying for unnecessary services. Assessments range from simple checklists to comprehensive examinations performed in hospitals and clinics by teams of medical and social work professionals.

Financial and legal planning can relieve stress by reducing uncertainty about the future, maximizing resources and preventing crises. Services include public benefits counseling, estate planning and assistance with advanced directives – documents with which someone designates another to make health, legal or financial decisions in the event they become unable to do so.

Get Healthy!

Exercise, good nutrition, sleep and relaxation can make any stressful situation more manageable. For example, eating at regular intervals helps maintain a steady blood sugar level, which has a calming effect. Common foods like milk, bananas, walnuts and tomatoes contain amino acids that produce serotonin, a chemical that helps the body relax. Other nutrients that can help keep you stay calm and relaxed are the complex carbohydrates found in whole-grain cereals, bread, rice and pasta, and the lecithin contained in dried beans, nuts, soy products and eggs. Exercise can alleviate tension and anxiety, improve your outlook, and strengthen your immune system. It doesn't have to be grueling – a few minutes of walking, cycling or stretching can really help.

Hire a Helper

If your loved one needs more help than you can provide, consider hiring a helper. Referred to as attendants, home care aides, homemakers, personal care assistants or choreworkers, these employees help with daily chores and activities such as bathing, dressing, preparing food, shopping or going to appointments. You may be eligible for public assistance to pay for a helper. Find out more by contacting your Area Agency on Aging or by checking the phone directory under "Home Care."

You can also hire helpers on your own. While doing so reduces the cost, it means that you will have to find the person through newspaper want ads, personal contacts or referral services. You will also need to check references, schedule hours and handle payroll tasks. When hiring helpers, always ask applicants for multiple references and check them! If your state licenses home-care workers (ask your local Area Agency on Aging), get the applicant's license number and confirm it. To find out more about hiring helpers, call your local Area Agency on Aging.

Learn More About Your Family Member's Illness

Learning about an illness or disability – its symptoms, progression and treatment – can reduce anxiety, relieve uncertainty, help you plan for the future, and alert you to changes. Organizations like the American Cancer Society, the National Parkinson Foundation, and the Alzheimer's Association are excellent resources.

Learn to Identify Your "Stress Triggers"

Caregivers commonly find certain aspects of caregiving or certain behaviors of those they care for particularly stressful. Learning to identify your personal triggers is the first step in getting back in control. The next steps are learning how to respond to difficult behaviors more effectively and getting help.

Learn to Respond Appropriately to Difficult Behaviors

Some behaviors, particularly those associated with dementia, are disturbing and can cause embarrassment, frustration, exhaustion, stress and anger. These behaviors are often a part of the disease process or a response to frustration, pain or the ability to communicate. Carefully observing your family member's behavior and discussing it with professionals or other caregivers may help you figure out what's wrong and how to correct it. Although you will need to explore what works best for you and your impaired relative, the following suggestions and strategies have been found to be helpful:

Aggressive behavior that doesn't pose a physical threat can often be diffused by remaining calm, ignoring the behaviors, showing affection and trying to help the person regain a sense of control. Because aggressive behavior often occurs during personal care activities such as bathing, it helps to remember that you can always postpone the task until a later time when the patient is calmer. Avoid arguments. Confrontation or challenges make matters worse. At times, it may be necessary to isolate the older person or call for help to ensure your own safety or the safety of the patient and others.

Anger and agitation may result from medical causes or the adverse side effects of medications. Check with your family member's physician if the anger or agitation becomes severe.

Lack of empathy. People who suffer from dementias may lose the ability to think abstractly, which can result in difficulty seeing things through someone else's eyes. The result can be thoughtless or hurtful remarks or unreasonable, demanding requests. It may help to remind them how they affect others.

