



Dual Caregivers: Surviving and Conquering the Challenges

Everyone has a number of natural roles or relationships that you manage and balance. These roles and relationships may change as a result of becoming a caregiver. As dual caregivers can attest, not only does the caregiving need of a family member change your relationship to that person, it causes a change in your ability to fulfill your other roles and responsibilities.

Think about the roles you may have: caregiver, spouse, parent, adult child, sibling, grandparent, friend, or others

- Dual care giving can be overwhelming. At times, do you find yourself exhausted or discouraged? How do you notice this? What do you do?
- Have you made changes in your schedule and priorities?
- Do you notice a variety of feelings being stirred up as a result of the demands on you, such as embarrassment, anger, grief, loss, hurt, guilt, relief, or sadness?
- How has your family worked together to manage caregiving?
- What new strengths have you built on to cope with these new demands?

There are ways to manage your responsibilities while also taking care of yourself.

- Ask for and accept help. Be specific with what you need.
- Be gentle with yourself and give yourself regular or daily breaks.
- Eat nutritiously and drink plenty of water.
- Get exercise, breathe fresh air, and soak in the sunshine.
- Take care of your own physical and emotional health
- Educate yourself about your loved ones' conditions
- Schedule "me" time, even if it is just a few minutes each day.
- Give yourself permission to feel your feelings, and let them go.
- Strive for good enough, not perfection.
- Use tools to stay organized, such as a calendar for appointments, a notebook for medical history, or a log for telephone numbers or calls.
- Use all the resources available to you.



Where do you turn for support? Here are some ideas to spark your own creativity.

- Keep a list of people that you can call for support and help, along with their availability and phone numbers. Develop your list with specific examples of what friends and family members can do to help, such as mow the lawn, pick up a few groceries, or just lend a listening ear.
- Identify religious or spiritual communities that you can call on for support.
- Have the doctor's or other providers' telephone numbers ready at hand.
- If you have children, keep the school support staff informed of any changes that may be occurring, so they may support you and your children.
- Look to Veteran Service Organizations such as the VFW, American Legion or Wounded Warrior Project.
- Dial 2-1-1 if available in your community to speak with an operator about your support needs in order to connect with resources in your area.
- The Area Agency on Aging or the Department of Health and Human Services Eldercare Locator may offer ideas and resources you may not have considered.
- Contact national groups for education about a particular illness or condition, such as the Alzheimer's Association, American Cancer Society, National Parkinson Foundation, National Center for PTSD, or National Alliance for Mental Illness.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs offers many supports to Veterans and Caregivers alike. Contact the Caregiver Support Coordinator or the Veteran's Patient Aligned Care Team if services or supports are needed. Call the Veterans Crisis Line if there is a crisis (1-800-273-8255, then press 1).
- Take time to view the VA Web site (www.va.gov) or the VA Caregiver Web site (www.caregiver.va.gov) and familiarize yourself with the many benefits and supports available.
- Call the VA Caregiver Support Line (855-260-3274) if you need emotional support, resources, or a referral to your local Caregiver Support Coordinator.

Dual caregiving can be overwhelming but please remember that you are not alone!
There are ways to help manage your responsibilities while also taking care of yourself!