



Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an effort to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator addresses topics of most frequently asked questions via Caregiver's Answers, Topics and Helpful Information (CATHI). Additionally, caregivers are also invited to e-mail individual questions to the Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org.

Emotional Fatigue

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, founder of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, states there are four kinds of people in the world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.

There should be fifth on the list: those individuals who have not realized, they themselves have begun the caregiving journey and their ranks are growing daily.

They are helping their loved one balance the checkbook, phoning them every morning to make sure they have taken their cholesterol, diabetes, and arthritis medications, or even picking up groceries for a neighbor who is disabled. They do not self-identify as caregivers because they are 'just' being a good child or friend.

Why is it important to "self-identify"?

It is important to self-identify as a caregiver because the sooner you realize you have begun your own caregiving journey, the sooner you will understand the emotional toll you may experience and start looking for ways to manage it.

The emotional toll during your journey will encompass a wide surprising range of feelings. If you do not recognize what is happening and why, you might end up just feeling guilty about your emotions, and guilt can be described as useless feelings.

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Recognizing the symptoms

Earlier symptoms of emotional fatigue tend to come and go; and they even tend to overlap, so as a caregiver you need to identify them-rat of the bat- so that you can take care of your emotional health and other needs.

Initially, symptoms are subtle, but usually include:

- Waiting-for-the-other-shoe-to- drop (nervousness or tension)
- Situational bouts of sadness, “the blues” or tearing-up
- Forgetfulness, inability to concentrate and/or mental sluggishness
- Irregular feelings of frustration, anger or guilt due to interruptions and not being able to get things done
- Periodical and often situational, feelings of resentment, impatience, and/or irritability at colleagues, family members or the person you are “just” helping
- Poor or interrupted sleep
- A feeling of isolation
- A growing realization of the sacrifices, such as, time, money, and opportunities
- An increase in aches, pains, and, not surprisingly, blood pressure

Five steps to better emotional health

If you have recently begun your caregiving journey, and are experience any of the symptoms above, the following strategies will help you identify the new role you have taken on and help you manage the emotional stressors than can come early in the caregiving journey.

Put a name on what you are doing. Caregiving is not just ‘helping out’; it is taking on responsibility for the well-being of another person. The quicker you self-identify as a caregiver, the quicker you will be able to recognize and deal with the emotional roller-coaster that can come as caregiver responsibilities increase.

Listen to what your emotions are telling you. Those feelings are normal response of caregiving, realize that what you are experiencing is common for caregivers and that will go a long way toward helping you take action for you own well-being and not react to your emotions in a negative way.

Embrace change. Understand that the key to being a successful caregiver are flexibility and adaptability on your journey.

Let go. Most of what is causing the feeling of emotional fatigue is out of your control. Early on, recognize your limitations and give yourself permission to let go or delegate some of your

responsibilities that you have taken on. When you can do that, you will be able to replenish and be able to continue to replenish others.

Every caregiver journey is different, the options that are going to help you through your journey need to be individualized.

To find individualized options, tap into the wide array of home-based services and community programs and supports that are available, no matter where you live. Understanding the resources that are available to you, will help you during your caregiving journey. Some services/resources are paid for on an hourly daily basis; some are provided for a small or sliding fee; some are free. Senior Resources of Guilford has a lot of opportunities for Caregivers, through their Family Caregiver Support Program that all Family Caregivers can tap into.

Perhaps the fastest way to find the resources you want, will use and can afford is to check in with the HR department where you work. More companies than ever have recognized that their employees are also caregivers and use consultants to help them deal with their caregiving issues. Senior Resources of Guilford also offers Options Counseling for Caregivers. Options Counseling is for the caregiver and their loved one they are caring for to meet with a certified options counselor about change and what the next step to take is.

You could also find a consultant on your own, by contacting local care managers, social service agencies, and/or national agencies. The caregiving expertise and knowledge of community resources these professional can provide will help you prioritize your needs and help you locate the services, agencies, and organizations that can provide the help you need to manage the emotional stress that comes with caregiving.

To find information on your own, start with Senior Resources of Guilford's Family Caregiver Support Program and then widen your search net to include county or municipal office on aging/disability, disease specific organizations, religiously-affiliated service groups, reputable caregiver Web sites and/or help lines (Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine 336-333-6981).

Probably the most overlooked options for help, however, are support groups. Connecting with others who get or understand who you are experiencing gives you a safe place to talk about your feelings and hear other options. You will discuss practical things, the strategies and tips, that you can use to cope with your emotional stress, as well as help you deal with your isolation. Contact Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at Senior Resources of Guilford at 336-373-4816 to get a list of support groups in Guilford County.

This article was adapted from *Today's Caregiver: Emotional Fatigue*, By: Eileen Beal, MA, 2019.

****If you would like to join our mailing list to learn more about programs and services available to you contact our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org***

For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 884-6981 in High Point, all other areas (336) 333-6981 or the Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (336) 373-4816 in Greensboro or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.



North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program
Completing the Care