

The following is information about the importance of caring for yourself while you are caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease. There is no corresponding recording to watch or listen to, but handouts are available for you to keep.

**Stop Robbing Peter to Pay Paul:
Tough Love for People Caring for Other People**

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- One survey indicated that half of those surveyed were more afraid of caring for someone with Alzheimer's Disease than having it.
- This is not to say that people are selfish or don't want the responsibility of caring for someone with Alzheimer's. Rather, people don't want to see their loved ones suffer the effects of the disease, and they worry that they will not be able to provide adequate care for their loved one.

You don't have to do it alone.

In fact, you are not doing anyone any favors if you do.

Getting help can include:

- asking a friend or family member to assist you in providing care, running errands, or completing household tasks.
- hiring a professional to help with some tasks.
- taking advantage of adult day services or respite services.
- asking someone to stay with your loved one while you get some time away from the house.
- seeking out social service agencies.

You are still being a good caregiver when you...

- Take a break.
- Get educated.
- Attend a support group.
- Receive support services.
- Take away the car keys.
- Place your loved one in a facility or use hospice.

Parents: When your children were small, you needed a break sometimes. Your loved one isn't a child, but it's the same concept of taking good care of yourself so that you can take good care of someone else.

- Care recipients benefit from socialization.
- Professional caregivers do not have expectations based on who the person was. They can provide care that is not based on how they want the person to be again but rather based on what the person needs.

It is easy for someone else to tell you what you should do with your loved one when you are the one who will have to deal with the repercussions.

Trust that social services and other skilled providers have dealt with all types of situations. While you have the power to make the decisions concerning your loved one, know that other people know what you are going through and are able to help you.

If you don't laugh you are going to cry.

- You still need to express your emotions in healthy ways.
- If you laugh at something the person does, you are not laughing at them but at the absurdity of the disease.

Don't sweat it. Just do it.

Using support services is like exercise:

- You dread it while you are anticipating it.
- It is hard at first, and you feel like giving up.
- When it's over, you are grateful that you did it.

I get by with a little help from my friends...

- When people ask if there is anything you need, they mean it. Don't be afraid to ask them, because they don't know what you need until you ask.
- Family members often do not understand how overwhelming care is until they experience it.
- If you do it alone, you are more likely to be depressed, get sick, or be hospitalized. Is that good for your loved one?

I wish I would have done this SOONER...

- Denial often prevents caregivers from seeking out support.
- Denial is a normal coping mechanism, but there are ways of coping that will yield better results for both you and your loved one.

- Your feelings are normal and nothing to be ashamed of.

It's not your fault.

- It takes more courage to make the call, attend the group, or use the service than to trudge through each day knowing that you got through the day before the same way.
- Arm yourself with education, seek out others who are in your shoes, use this wisdom to allow yourself to care longer in the most loving way possible.

What comes around goes around.

- Don't suffer in silence and isolation.
- Guilt contributes to caregivers' reluctance to use services. Sometimes the care recipient begs them not to out of fear.
- Both of you will benefit from the time apart, increase in socialization, and opportunity for rest and relaxation.

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If you would like more information about this topic or would like to provide suggestions for future topics, please contact the Iowa Consortium for Applied Gerontology. Established in 2003 at the University of Northern Iowa, the Iowa Consortium for Applied Gerontology focuses on developing timely and accessible educational programs for Iowa communities. IaCAG provides services and opportunities for Iowa's senior population, service providers, education professionals, businesses, students, and family caregivers. Visit www.iacag.org or call (319) 273-7961 for more information.

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