

As The Primary Caregiver, Should I Journal My Feelings About Alzheimer's Disease?

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By William Hammond, J.D.

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Being a caregiver is stressful and difficult. It involves contradictory feelings, thoughts and frustrations. When you have to care for a loved one who has Alzheimer's, you have to be patient, talk with a calm voice and never "talk down" to your loved one.

Journaling your thoughts and feelings will definitely help you cope with the situation. Write in your journal all that comes through your mind and your heart; nobody but you will read it. It is between you and your journal. Let your pen guide you through the pages. You may want to do some extra research on Alzheimer's disease to better understand the process and stages your loved one will pass through. If you are a little bit knowledgeable about the disease, the process of caring will be easier on both you and your loved one.

You can keep daily notes on your loved one, such as bathing or eating changes, whether she becomes agitated, and so on. It can also help you remember things to discuss with the doctor.

The good thing about a journal is that it is handy and you can write whenever you feel like it, day or night. It will never contradict you. On the contrary, it will aid you in dealing with your internal emotions; it will relieve your mind and your soul. If you are uncomfortable about writing, then it may be easier for you to express your feelings by recording them on a tape recorder. If you like, you can recall some family gathering you all had together, a camping trip or fishing trip where your loved one caught a BIGGGGG fish! You can read this part to him and it might trigger some memory in your loved one...a memory that was lost to Alzheimer's.

Journaling will also help you release the burden of care giving you may have. Releasing the burden through the pen will definitely ease the pain. But journaling should not be the only way out for these strong feelings you have. You may want to enroll in a support group. You can check through the Alzheimer's Association if there is such a group in your area. Speaking to other people will help in getting all these negative emotions out. And most of the participants are dealing with exactly the same

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emotions because they have to care for a loved one who has dementia. Sometimes, speaking out loud and getting out these feelings will do you a lot of good and you will feel much better after. You may even make friends through these groups, friends that will be able to support you as time goes on.

Remember, you are not alone. You have friends and family to talk to. Maybe you can ask a family member to help with your loved one. It will ease the burden and give you more time to yourself, to journal and to recharge your batteries.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative

solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at

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Avoid Burnout When Caregiving An Aging Parent

By Dana Sanders

When providing care to aging or disabled parents, many caregivers ignore the most important person involved in the caregiving process. "Who?" – you may ask? The answer might surprise you: The Caregiver.

Many times caregivers get so wrapped up in attending to parent's needs, trying to fit quality time with their own family into their schedule, and oftentimes attempting to balance a career, they forget or simply neglect to take some time for their own personal needs.

As a caregiver, the results of not allocating personal time can easily lead to intense emotions such as stress, anxiety, frustration, guilt, and feeling extremely overwhelmed. Many caregivers fail to realize that these emotions and feelings could lead to caregiver burnout.

If you have just taken the reins as a caregiver to your parent, or perhaps you have been serving in the role for years, you may have never heard of the term "caregiver burnout" or would even recognize the early warning signs. And you may not be aware that caregivers have an increased risk for depression, diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems.

Caregiver burnout is the unpleasant side effects many adult children have to cope with when providing care to their aging or disabled parents. The signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout may display themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The most important thing to remember as a caregiver, and to avoid burnout, is to make some time for yourself. Whether it is treating yourself to a shopping trip, preparing your favorite meal, or going on a vacation getaway for the weekend with your own family, remember you should not feel guilty for putting

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your own wants and needs first.

The second thing to remember as a caregiver is never hesitate or feel embarrassed to ask for help. If you're feeling overwhelmed, ask a sibling or another family member for assistance. You may also consider adult day care, or respite care to provide you some relief.

Even if you just need a day away from your role as caregiver, don't let your guilty conscience persuade you otherwise. It would be better to enjoy a day of rest and relaxation to rejuvenate your mind, body, and soul before letting yourself fall into the ruts of burnout.

There are proven and effective methods to combat and prevent caregiver burnout. These techniques are easy and simple daily activities. Anyone can practice these burnout-relieving techniques, whether it's taking an early morning jog or writing in a journal before bed.

You will find yourself amazed at how taking less than an hour a day can alleviate the stress and anxiety that comes along with providing care to an aging or disabled parent, especially those with rapidly deteriorating health or suffering from the heart-wrenching effects of Alzheimer's disease.

In addition of ways to prevent caregiver burnout, there are also many helpful resources available to guide you through the confusing emotions and physically exhausting situations you may find yourself in

as a caregiver. If you feel you may already be experiencing burnout, talk to someone, whether it's your spouse, friend, or physician.

Dana Sanders is the author of "Becoming Your Parent's Caregiver", an ebook written out of her own experience and that provides advice for the children of an aging or disabled parent. Please visit

for information to help you care for your parent.

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