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# Self Care While Caring for Others

Angela Cohan · Friday, September 1st, 2023

Over the past few years there has been an exponential increase in the number of my friends and family members who have become caregivers for their elderly parents while taking care of young children or teenagers. Family caregivers are individuals who give care to family or friends without payment, generally in the home environment. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC), about 65 million Americans (29%) serve as caregivers to a child with special needs and/or aging adult.

Americans are living longer, albeit not healthy lives. I attended a health summit a few years ago where the medical experts contended that if a man lives to be age 80 he will have an elevated chance of having prostate cancer cells in his body. Conversely, women who live past that age have a higher risk of breast cancer. Grim news — but chronic diseases and inflammation manifest differently for different bodies.

In a *Time* magazine article detailing her father's Alzheimer's diagnosis, Shauna Sweeney claims that by 2030, 24 million people will require long-term care. She refers to the phenomenon as a "Silver Tsunami." She developed an app for family caregivers detailing life hacks, tips and strategies to deal with the emotional and behavioral changes in aging parents. In her article, she also mentions Artificial Intelligence apps such as *Replika* – a digital companion that can alleviate feelings of loneliness as well as providing emotional support for caregivers.

However, artificial intelligence cannot replace human interaction. Caregivers often suffer from anxiety, depression and overwhelm. It's crucial for caregivers to have emotional support. In addition to personal and community-based networks, many families also benefit from exploring structured caregiving assistance when responsibilities begin to exceed what can realistically be managed at home. These services are not meant to replace family involvement, but rather to complement it by reducing day-to-day pressure and preventing burnout. In practice, this often includes professional in-home support where trained caregivers assist with essential daily tasks, ensuring continuity of care while allowing family members to rest and focus on their own well-being. In this context, options such as **home care Boston** are commonly considered by families seeking reliable, local support tailored to both medical and non-medical needs.

Here are a few suggestions for managing stress and taking care of your physical, emotional and mental health:

- **Finding a support system —** there are many organizations that provide local and online support for caregivers.

- For example, the **Caregiver Action Network** offers a free help desk (via chat, email or telephone) to answer questions about care giving challenges or how to find a support group. You can contact the Care Support Team at **(855)- 227 – 3640.**
- **The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)** specializes in providing support services for care givers of a person with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. The toll-free Helpline at **(866)-322-8484** is staffed by licensed professional social workers.
- **Working Daughter** is a website as well as a Facebook platform founded by Liz O'Donnell to help other working daughter balance work and family lives while caregiving. You can also listen to the Working Daughter podcast.

It's imperative to eat well, get plenty of rest and set time for your own hobbies and exercise when possible.

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