



Appreciating MS Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Looking After Someone with MS

Caring for someone with an unpredictable condition like multiple sclerosis isn't easy. Although it can strengthen your bond with your loved one and be very rewarding, it can also be exhausting, both physically and emotionally.

In addition to the tips listed below for avoiding burnout, remember that your feelings and mental health are just as important as the person you are caring for.

Consider talking to someone about your emotional struggles as an MS caregiver, whether that person is a therapist, a fellow caregiver or someone from a support organization. Suppressing feelings of loss, frustration, inadequacy, anger or guilt will take a toll on your health and your ability to provide good care.

And above all, remember that your best is all you can do. Your loved one appreciates how much you do to help them cope with MS, probably more than you know.

Read our MS caregivers infographic below to learn more about caregiving and avoiding burnout.



90 MILLION
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.¹

1 MILLION AMERICANS
are also caring for veterans from the IRAQ+AFGHANISTAN wars who have visible injuries and invisible wounds.

True Dedication
A caregiver may help their loved one with **washing, dressing, eating** and other daily activities, as well as taking **medications**, getting to doctor's **appointments**, and so much more.

Struggle with CARE
Each member of a household has the luxury of being able to make choices about the services they need. But for many caregivers, the choices are limited.
• Multiple sclerosis
• Lupus
• Parkinson's
• Down's syndrome
• Muscular dystrophy
• Autism
• Cancer
• AIDS
• Dementia
• HIV/AIDS
• Arthritis
• Osteoporosis
• Depression

For young and YOUNG AT HEART
Because of America's aging population, the number of people needing care has been rising, and is expected to keep going up. By 2020, people age 65 and older are expected to make up around **19%** of the American population, up from **14.5%** in 2000.²
However, parents caring for children with disabilities are also in the family caregiver ranks. Children with conditions like **autism, muscular dystrophy** and **down's syndrome** all require a caregiver, often through into adulthood.

CAREGIVER BURNOUT
Caregiver burnout is when a caregiver becomes emotionally and physically exhausted under the strain of caring for another person. This can manifest as:
• Irritability and feeling blue
• Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns
• Withdrawing from friends and other loved ones
• Abandoning activities you used to enjoy
• Changes in appetite and/or weight
• Depression and/or anxiety

Six tips to **AVOID BURNOUT**SM

Stay HEALTHY
It's easy to spend so much time thinking about your loved one's health that you can completely forget about your own. Make sure you take care of yourself, too – not work, exercise and get enough sleep.

Pursue your INTERESTS
Giving up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can leave you feeling empty. Try to find time to do the things you love to do. You might even find a way to share your interests with your loved one.

Take time to DE-STRESS
Consider taking up a stress-reducing activity like yoga, meditation or deep breathing techniques that will help you let go of the stress of being a caregiver.

Take A BREAK
Being a caregiver, although a labor of love, can be emotionally and physically draining. Give yourself time to be a caregiver every now and then to rest and recharge.

Connect with other CAREGIVERS
Joining a support group or an online forum for caregivers can help you to feel less alone in your struggles and provide a sense of community.

Seek and ACCEPT HELP
There is no shame in admitting you need help. Asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered, can lighten your load and make you better able to cope.

