



AWARENESS

CARERS NEED CARE TOO

Caring can be very rewarding, but without the right support it can have a negative impact on your health, career, finances and relationships.

In some countries like the UK, there are special campaigns around 'Carers Week' from **10 to 16 June 2019** for raising awareness around these issues and helping to support carers themselves.

If we look to our own communities of caregivers, from those who look after AIDS orphans and children with malnutrition, to those working in hospitals and old age homes, there is no doubt that we need to be doing the same. According to Alzheimer's South Africa, more than 80 per cent of caregivers report that they frequently experience high levels of stress, and nearly half say they suffer from depression.

Recognising the signs and learning how to reduce stress can help. According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group, here are some ways to avoid caregiver burnout:

- 1. Take time for you.** Take time for yourself every day to recharge, even just a few minutes to go for a walk, read a book, listen to music or slip out to the shops. Reducing your stress will make you a better caregiver.
- 2. Know your limits.** You can't provide good care if you feel overwhelmed and stressed out. Make a list of all the tasks you need to do in a week, including your caregiving duties and personal responsibilities. Brainstorm who else might be able to do these.

- 3. Stick to a routine.** It can help you feel in control rather than stressed and lets everyone know what to expect. It also provides a sense of security for those you are caring for and helps them maintain their own abilities when you're not around.
- 4. Eat well-balanced meals.** Keeping your own energy levels up by making sure you're eating healthy foods and that you're not hungry will also help your mood and lessen irritability general.
- 5. Get screened for stress and depression.** If you feel like your mental health is suffering, i.e. you feel down more often and sometimes have suicidal thoughts, you should see a doctor to address these problems.
- 6. Accept help from others.** If a family member pays a visit or offers to assist in any way, whether it's to help you personally or to give you a few hours "off duty", use this as a chance to prioritise your own needs.
- 7. Get enough sleep.** Most caregivers who say their own health has gotten worse blame loss of sleep. Relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, may help you at bedtime. If you have to do occasional nightshifts, try to take naps during the day.

Caring is something that will affect each and every one of us in our lifetime, whether we become a carer; or need care ourselves. Remember to fill your cup first before pouring out to others.