

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

Caregiving Stress: Warning Signs

Caring for a loved one is such demanding work that stress can become a major factor in coping with the situation. The symptoms you may experience are similar to the symptoms of depression.

Here are some warning signs that stress is taking its toll:

–You feel angry or irritable and just want to deny the whole situation is even happening.

–You feel as if you don't have the time or energy to "waste" on pleasant activities, and you become more isolated.

–You find it hard to concentrate because you are constantly thinking about your loved one's needs and what you have to do.

–You feel more and more depressed.

–Even though you are exhausted, you have problems sleeping.

–You start to develop health problems of your own.

You may feel stress for any number of reasons:

–There are multiple demands on your time and energy, but you feel as if you should be doing more.

–Some tasks and responsibilities are in direct conflict with others, and you're worried that you can't do it all.

–It seems that everyone has high expectations of you.

–You don't have the knowledge you need of aging issues and of your loved one's illness, so sometimes you don't know what to do.

–You feel you can't meet the ever-increasing needs of your loved one.

–You have limited access to the support you need and limited money to cover the costs of care.

–You feel "stuck" or "trapped" in the role of caregiving and don't know if you can do it for much longer.

–You're embarrassed when you take your care-receiver to appointments or out for dinner.

–You, your care-receivers and immediate family member don't agree on everything.

–You feel "put upon" because of lack of support.

–You feel as if your life's been taken from you.

–There is a general lack of communication—with your loved one, his or her doctor, your immediate family members.

–Your family and friends express negative attitudes about your role as a caregiver.

–It is hard to watch a loved one's gradual but progressive decline.

–There are problems in other parts of your life (work, spouse, children, prior commitments).

–You miss your own life, your friends, your privacy.

Tips for the Caregiver

–Be aware of the presence of God and nourish your spiritual life.

–Plan ahead. Don't wait for a crisis.

–Don't panic.

–Be creative. If your first solution doesn't work, find a new one and try again.

–Get reliable information about your loved one's illness and be aware of any emotional issues.

–Learn about your role as a caregiver and improve your skills.

–Practice new coping strategies for the particular challenges you face in caring for your loved one.

–Find your family's strengths and work together.

–Accept offers of informal support from your family, friends, and parish community.

–Respect yourself and set limits.

–Take care of yourself with rest, good nutrition, exercise, and some time off.

–Access the formal support of social services in your community.

–Follow the advice of St. Francis of Assisi:

"Start by doing what's necessary,

then what's possible,

and suddenly you are doing the impossible."