

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

A Depression Checklist for Family Caregivers

Over time, the challenges of caregiving can affect both the caregiver's and the care-receiver's physical and emotional health. Consider the frequency and severity that you or your loved one have experienced any of these symptoms for more than two weeks:

- A persistently sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, and apathy
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and guilt
- Frequent crying
- A loss of interest in doing things that were once pleasurable
- Disturbed sleep: insomnia, early waking, or oversleeping
- Disturbed eating: a loss of appetite, weight gain, or weight loss
- Decreased energy and constant fatigue
- Recurring aches and pains
- Restlessness and irritability
- Difficulty performing daily tasks, such as going to work
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Neglect in personal appearance
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Seek professional help. An early diagnosis is important. Treatments have been very successful.

Some changes in lifestyle a caregiver can make that will help restore emotional health:

- Take time to pray each day and nurture your spiritual life
- Join a support group
- Get together with friends and have fun
- Reduce stress and avoid overloading your schedule
- Learn to recognize your negative thoughts and be more aware of the positive
- Identify problems and explore solutions and coping strategies
- Look for something pleasant to do, and do it
- Maintain your sense of purpose
- Cherish family relationships
- Exercise and eat healthy foods
- Be patient with yourself

Resource for More Information

National Institute of Mental Health: address: Science Writing, Press, and Dissemination Branch, 6001 Executive Blvd., Room 8184, MSC 9663, Bethesda, MD 20892-9663; phone: 1-866-615-6464; web: www.nimh.nih.gov.

Elder Abuse Prevention Information for Family Caregivers

Keep in mind that caregiver stress can lead to abuse. This subject should be looked at very seriously. If there is a danger that your behavior is inappropriate, get help immediately. If you are not the primary caregiver, watch for any evidence that your loved one is in danger. Here are some basic facts:

Types of Abuse

- Physical abuse: inflicting physical pain or injury
- Sexual abuse: touching in a nonconsensual sexual way
- Emotional and psychological abuse: causing mental or emotional anguish
- Financial and material exploitation: using money or belongings without the consent of the owner
- Neglect: failing to provide care
- Abandonment: deserting a person under one's care
- Self-neglect: behaving in a way that threatens one's own health and safety

Possible Causes

- Caregiver stress: providing care for an elderly person is not an easy task
- Impairment of elder: the more impaired a person is, the higher the risk of abuse
- History of family violence
- Personal problems of abuser: problems with drugs or alcohol or financial difficulties

Getting Help

The National Center on Elder Abuse, an agency funded by U.S. Administration on Aging, offers the reminder: "If someone you care about is in imminent danger, call 911, police, or hospital emergency *now*."

--Check www.ncea.aoa.gov. The National Center on Elder Abuse has information, a list of abuse hotlines in every state, and frequently asked questions.

--If you have trouble finding the number you need, go to the Eldercare Locator at www.eldercare.gov or call 1-800-677-1116; or look in your local phone directory for any of these programs:

- Adult protective services: a state agency that investigates reports of abuse of vulnerable individuals over the age of eighteen
- State elder abuse hotline: A twenty-four-hour hotline for confidential reports
- Law enforcement: Your local police department or sheriff's office
- Long-term-care ombudsman: A state agency that investigates abuse in a nursing home setting
- Senior Information and Assistance: information on a wide range of services available in your area

If in doubt, report it!

Catholic Caregivers is a free monthly publication of CatholicCaregivers.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver. Individuals, dioceses, parishes, Knights of Columbus councils, schools and other Catholic organizations are encouraged to make and distribute copies. For more information, go to www.CatholicCaregivers.com. **Vol. 4, No. 8**