



This November, Honor the Family Caregiver

An ever increasing number of Americans choose to remain in their own homes as they age, oftentimes making the responsibility for care fall on a loved one's shoulders. In fact, statistics reveal that services of the over 50 million people providing some level of care to family members represents 80 percent of all home care services delivered today. These services are valued at \$306 billion a year, more than twice the amount spent on paid home care and nursing services combined.

The daily demands of caring for a loved one make it one of the most difficult jobs ever. Shouldering this daily dependence can test even the strongest amongst us, leading to caregiver burnout. This November is National Family Caregivers Month. Take the time this month to celebrate the family caregivers that you know and, if you provide care for a loved one, take some time out for yourself and plan for ongoing relief.

As a family caregiver, the most important thing one can do for oneself and the frail or ill care recipient is to take good care of oneself mentally and physically in order to provide the best care and support possible to the one who needs care. The caregiver should take time to participate in activities that are personally enjoyable and meet his or her own emotional and social needs, making for a happier and healthier caregiver, with the end result being a positive mindset that can benefit both the caregiver and the person for whom the care is provided.

When signs first appear that hint at caregiver burnout, such as depression and hopelessness, trouble sleeping, lack of energy and any other personality changes, it is time to step back from the daily responsibility, take some personal time and restore energy. Enlist the help of a friend, a family member or a neighbor, or consider enlisting a professional caregiver service to avoid burnout. A professional caregiver can provide emergency respite care, relief for a few days, or better yet, can assist on a weekly or monthly basis allowing time for personal needs without sacrificing the needs of the care recipient.

Although caring for a family member or friend can be a huge responsibility, there is no need to feel alone or helpless. Taking time away from care, enlisting the help of an in-home caregiver such as at Live Free Home Health Care and keeping a positive attitude can help both the caregiver and the care recipient enjoy a better quality of life.

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Source: Arno, Peter S., "Economic Value of Informal Caregiving," presented at the Care Coordination and the Caregiving Forum, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, NIH, Bethesda, MD, January 25-27, 2006.