



Appreciating COPD Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Avoiding COPD Caregiver Burnout

Caring for someone with COPD isn't easy. Physical exhaustion paired with the heartbreak of seeing your loved one struggle to take each breath is bound to lead to caregiver burnout.

As well as the tips listed below for preventing burnout, remember that talking to someone who understands about your struggles as a caregiver can be a huge help. Consider talking to a therapist or a fellow COPD caregiver to express your feelings of loss, frustration, resentment, anger or guilt. Keeping these perfectly normal feelings bottled up can be damaging to your mental health, and your ability to provide the best care you can.

Also remember that it's not selfish to take a break — it's healthy. Taking time to relax and recharge makes you a happier, more effective caregiver.

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



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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 illnesses.

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

Handle with CARE
 Caregivers often assist with tasks that would normally be done by the person being cared for. But it's not always easy to help someone who has a condition that makes it difficult to do things on their own.

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Fibromyalgia
- COPD
- Down's syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy
- Autism
- Cancer
- ALS
- Dementia
- Parkinson's
- Stroke

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 **36%** of the American population, up from **28.5%** in 2009.²

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 completely forget about your own. Make sure you take care of yourself: eat well, exercise and get enough sleep.
- Pursue your INTERESTS**
 Taking up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can help build up your mental health and ensure that you reserve your loved one some time to do things you enjoy.
- 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. Get time to do something you love and recharge.
- Connect with other CAREGIVERS**
 Finding 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. Caregivers who ask for help are better able to cope.

