

# Alzheimer's Caregiving: Caring For Yourself

Taking care of yourself—physically and mentally—is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver. This could mean asking family members and friends to help out, doing things you enjoy, or getting help from a [home health care service](#). Taking these actions can bring you some relief. It also may help keep you from getting ill or depressed.

## Ways To Take Care Of Yourself

Here are some ways you can take care of yourself:

- Ask for help when you need it.
- [Eat healthy foods](#).
- Join a caregiver's support group.
- Take breaks each day.
- Spend time with friends.
- Keep up with your hobbies and interests.
- [Get exercise](#) as often as you can.
- [See your doctor](#) on a regular basis.
- Keep your [health, legal, and financial information](#) up-to-date.



## Asking For Help

Everyone needs help at times. However, many caregivers find it hard to ask for help. They may feel they should be able to do everything themselves, or that it's not all right to leave the person in their care with someone else. Or maybe they can't afford to pay someone to watch the person for an hour or two.

Here are some tips about asking for help:

- Remind yourself that it's okay to ask for help from family, friends, and others. You don't have to do everything yourself.
- Ask people to help out in specific ways, like making a meal, visiting the person, or taking the person out for a short time.

## Asking For Help (cont'd)

---

- Call for help from home health care or adult day care services when needed. To find providers in your area, contact [Eldercare Locator](#).
- Use national and local resources to find out [how to pay](#) for some of this help or get respite care services.

You may want to join a support group of Alzheimer's disease caregivers. These groups meet in person or online to share experiences and tips and give each other support. Ask your doctor, check online, or contact [Alzheimer's Orange County](#).

### What If Something Happened to You?

It is important to have a plan in case of your own illness, disability, or death.

- Consult a lawyer about setting up a living trust, [durable power of attorney for health care](#) and finances, and other estate planning tools.
- Consult with family and close friends to decide who will take responsibility for the person with Alzheimer's. You also may want to seek information about your local public guardian's office, mental health conservator's office, adult protective services, or other case management services. These organizations may have programs to assist the person with Alzheimer's in your absence.
- Maintain a notebook for the responsible person who will assume caregiving. Such a notebook should contain the following information:
  - Emergency phone numbers
  - Current [problem behaviors and possible solutions](#)
  - Ways to calm the person with Alzheimer's
  - Assistance needed with [toileting, feeding, or grooming](#)
  - [Favorite activities](#) or food

Preview board and care or long-term care facilities in your community and select a few as possibilities. Share this information with the responsible person. If the person with Alzheimer's disease is no longer able to live at home, the responsible person will be better able to carry out your wishes for long-term care.

### Coping With Emotions And Stress

---

Caring for a person with Alzheimer's takes a lot of time and effort. Your job can become even harder when the person gets angry with you, hurts your feelings, or forgets who you are. Sometimes, you may feel discouraged, sad, lonely, frustrated, confused, or angry. These feelings are normal.

Here are some things you can say to yourself that might help you feel better:

- I'm doing the best I can.
- What I'm doing would be hard for anyone.
- I'm not perfect, and that's okay.
- I can't control some things that happen.
- Sometimes, I just need to do what works for right now.
- I will enjoy the moments when we can be together in peace.
- Even when I do everything I can think of, the person with Alzheimer's disease will still have problem behaviors because of the illness, not because of what I do.
- I will try to get help from a counselor if caregiving becomes too much for me.

Some caregivers find that going to a church, temple, or mosque helps them cope with the daily demands placed on them. For others, simply having a sense that larger forces are at work in the world helps them find a sense of balance and peace.

### Getting Professional Help



Mental health professionals and social workers help you deal with any stress you may be feeling. They help you understand feelings, such as anger, sadness, or feeling out of control. They can also help you make plans for unexpected or sudden events.

Mental health professionals charge by the hour. Medicare, Medicaid, and some private health insurance plans may cover some of these costs. Ask your health insurance plan which mental health counselors and services it covers. Then check with your doctor, local family service agencies, and community mental health agencies for referrals to counselors.

## More Tips For Self-Care



Here are other things to keep in mind as you take care of yourself:

- Understand that you may feel powerless and hopeless about what's happening to the person you care for.
- Understand that you may feel a sense of loss and sadness.
- Understand why you've chosen to take care of the person with Alzheimer's disease. Ask yourself if you made this choice out of love, loyalty, a sense of duty, a religious obligation, financial concerns, fear, a habit, or self-punishment.
- Let yourself feel day-to-day "uplifts." These might include good feelings about the person you care for, support from other people, or time spent on your own interests.

**We Can Help!**

**Alzheimer's Orange County**

**Call 844.373.4400**

**For more caregiver tips**

**Visit us at:  
[www.alzoc.org/resources](http://www.alzoc.org/resources)**

**Information taken from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health**

**<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health> | NIH July 2021 | Reviewed by AlzOC July 2022**