



April 2012

## April: Elder Caregiving

### Balancing Work and Caregiving

**These tips can help you juggle your job responsibilities and your demands at home**

You've got important meetings at the office and projects that are almost due, but your ailing father, whom you care for, has been waking up every night this week. An estimated 25.5 million Americans face challenges like these every day as they struggle to balance work responsibilities with caring for a relative aged 50 or older. Not surprisingly, they wind up distracted, emotionally drained and physically exhausted.

The good news is that many employers are sympathetic to these demands. Some companies have programs to help caregivers find community services, counseling, respite care, legal and financial assistance, and caregiver support groups. Others have begun offering caregiving leave and flexible work arrangements. Of course, every caregiver's job is different, and even within the same company, different managers may be more or less supportive. These tips will help you manage your dual roles.

**Learn about company policies.** Talk to your human resources department or read your employee handbook to ascertain your company's policy regarding caregivers.

**Know your rights.** Ask your human resources department for information about the Family and Medical Leave Act. Under the FMLA, eligible workers are entitled to 12 weeks per year of unpaid leave for family caregiving, without the loss of job security or health benefits.

**Talk to your manager.** Be upfront about your role as a caregiver and the demands that it puts on you. It's better that she or he hear from you why you're coming in late or seem preoccupied.

**Inquire about flex-time.** Even if no formal policies exist, you should ask your boss if he or she would consider an arrangement to help you accommodate your caregiving responsibilities. For instance, you might ask if you could work from home a day or two a week.

**Don't abuse work time.** Whenever possible, avoid taking care of caregiving chores when you should be working. Stay organized. Use to-do lists and calendar reminders.

**Seek help.** Turn to the community for caregiving resources and services.

**Source:** Association of American Retired People (AARP)  
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[http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/pc\\_balancing\\_work\\_and\\_caregiving.html](http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/pc_balancing_work_and_caregiving.html)

### Self Care for the Caregiver

It is critical that if you are providing care for an elderly, ill or disabled family member or friend in the home, you also **make sure to also take care of yourself.**

Chloe JonPaul, the Maryland state representative for the National Family Caregivers Association, said that self care is not a luxury for caregivers; "It is your right as a human being." She shared these tips:

- Reward yourself with mini-breaks
- Exercise
- Attack the problem, not the person
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. It shows that you are problem-solving
- Use every tool you can find-local groups, web-based support networks, reading materials and anything else that can help.

**Source:** *NIH News in Health*  
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[http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2006/August/docs/01features\\_01.htm](http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2006/August/docs/01features_01.htm)

### Caregiving Resources

Who can you call if you need information on finding local resources to help you take care of your father? Are there organizations that will help pay for your mother's medication? Where can you find support groups for family caregivers?

This resource list includes some useful national organizations available to help answer these questions. This list does not include every possible resource, but it is a place to start in your search for information.

**Children of Aging Parents**  
800-227-7294 (toll-free)  
[www.caps4caregivers.org](http://www.caps4caregivers.org)

**Family Caregiver Alliance**  
800-445-8106 (toll-free)  
[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

**National Alliance for Caregiving**  
[www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org)

**National Family Caregivers Association**  
800-896-3650 (toll-free)  
[www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org)

**Well Spouse Foundation**  
800-838-0879 (toll-free)  
[www.wellspouse.org](http://www.wellspouse.org)

**Sources:** US National Institutes of Health  
National Institute on Aging  
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<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/caregivingresources.htm>



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### Caregiver Stress: The Impact of Chronic Disease on the Family

The responsibilities of caregiving, added to the routine pressures of maintaining a family and professional life, can naturally lead to stress. Stress, in turn, creates a ripple effect on the health and well-being of not only the caregiver, but everyone from family members to friends and co-workers.

#### Extra Burdens

Living with a chronic illness—and caring for a person with a chronic illness—can lead to physical and emotional stress. The symptoms of this stress may look similar in both the person dealing with the condition and the caregiver. Some of the symptoms include anger, anxiety, denial, and depression.

For the person with the chronic condition, the level and type of stress may vary depending on the specific illness and its prognosis. Common causes of physical and emotional stress include changes in ability to work, changes in relationships, and physical changes. Because of the levels and types of stress involved, the impact of chronic illness can extend far beyond the sufferers and their caregivers. A study of grown children with chronically ill parents revealed that even non-caregiver children showed an increased risk of depression. In every chronic condition, strong support systems benefit everyone. While the caregiver typically serves as a primary support system for the chronically ill person, friends and family members can also play important roles. This can be children taking on more responsibilities or friends ensuring that caregivers take time off to relax. These steps help lower the stress level.

#### Signs and Solutions

Helpful coping strategies include:

- Take breaks—Schedule quiet time, visit with friends who can offer positive reinforcement, or take regular days off from routine.
- Take care—Eat balanced meals, get an adequate amount of sleep, and check with a doctor about any continuing problems.
- Understand your limits—Find local resources that can offer physical, emotional, and psychological support to you as a caregiver. Realize that you cannot do everything for everyone. Find out if your state offers helpful programs.
- Getting help—Relieve feelings of isolation, anger, and frustration by seeking out counselors or support groups.

**Source:** Author: Elissa Sonnenberg, MSEd  
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### Assisting Parents from Far Away

If you're responsible for the care of a loved one who lives far away, you're not alone. About 7 million adults nationwide are long-distance caregivers. Most assist aging parents who live an hour or more away.

A publication called *So Far Away: Twenty Questions and Answers for Long-Distance Caregiving* addresses some issues unique to long-distance caregiving. Developed by NIH's National Institute on Aging, this 44-page booklet is filled with ideas and resources that can help make caring for a loved one from afar more manageable and less stressful.

To view, download or order free print copies, visit [www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/LongDistanceCaregiving](http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/LongDistanceCaregiving)

### Healthy Recipe: Beef Barley and Lima Bean Soup

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1 can low sodium (14.5 oz) beef broth
- 1 lb lean beef stew meat, cut in 1/2 inch cubes
- 4 cups water
- 1/4 cup dry pearl barley
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 3 cups cooked (1 cup dry) large lima beans or 2 cans (15 oz each) butter beans, drained
- 2 Tbsp minced parsley

#### Instructions:

Place onion and carrots in a large dry saucepan. Cook over high heat, stirring frequently until vegetables start to brown and stick. Add 1/2 cup broth; stir to release brown bits. Cook until liquid evaporates and vegetables begin to stick again, about 5 minutes. Add 1/2 cup broth and continue cooking until liquid evaporates and vegetables are soft and golden brown. Add meat and cook until no longer pink. Stir in remaining broth, water, barley, salt and pepper. Simmer, covered, 25 minutes. Add beans and parsley; cook 10 minutes or until barley is soft.

#### Nutrition Facts:

Serving Size 1/6 of recipe  
Amount Per Serving

Calories 280	Calories from Fat 60
Cholesterol 45 mg	Sodium 270 mg
Total Carbohydrate 31g	Fiber 9g
Sugars 5g	Protein 24g

**Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnparecipe/RecipeDetails.aspx?RecipeId=247&Search=&PageNumber=1&SortBy=TA&PerformOrSearch=1&Fruits=&Vegetables=&MealTypes=129>