

# Caregiver's Corner



## Stress Management Tips for the At-Home Caregiver

### Hats Off!

If you're an at-home caregiver, hats off to you! While you may be caregiving from the heart, that doesn't lessen the physical, mental or emotional strain that you may sometimes feel. We hope these tips will prove helpful in the future, as you face the day-to-day challenges of caring for a loved one.

### Common Signs of Stress

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| √ Nervous tic                    | √ Excessive snacking   |
| √ Tapping finger, foot or pencil | √ Increased appetite   |
| √ Pacing                         | √ Decreased appetite   |
| √ Restlessness                   | √ Nausea/stomach pain  |
| √ Sudden energy bursts           | √ Diarrhea             |
| √ Making wild gestures           | √ Constipation         |
| √ Cold, clammy hands             | √ Hives                |
| √ Increased sweating             | √ Low grade infections |
| √ Clenched jaw/hand              | √ Loss of sex drive    |
| √ Muscle aches                   | √ Sleeplessness        |
| √ Headaches, dizziness           | √ Irritability         |
| √ Fear, panic, anxiety           | √ Bad temper           |
| √ Crying or wanting to           | √ Increased smoking    |
| √ Racing heart                   | √ Poor concentration   |
| √ Negative attitude              | √ Poor memory          |
| √ Negative self-talk             | √ Whirling mind        |
|                                  | √ Disorganized         |

It's important to learn to recognize your own signs of stress. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms above, you should heed the warnings that your body may be giving you. Of course, stress is only one of the possible causes of these symptoms. If in doubt, or if symptoms persist, consult your physician.

### 15 Proven Ways to Manage Stress

- 1 Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning - morning mishaps will be less stressful.
- 2 Prepare for the morning the evening before - set the breakfast table, put out clothes you plan to wear, etc.
- 3 Don't procrastinate - what you want to do tomorrow, do today. What you want to do today do now.
- 4 Plan ahead. Keep a well-stocked "emergency shelf" of the things you use a lot (foods, toiletries, etc.)
- 5 Allow 15 minutes extra to get to appointments.
- 6 Be prepared to wait. Take a book, or something to do.
- 7 Relax your standards. It's not a perfect world - just do your best and roll with the punches.
- 8 Pollyanna Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably a dozen blessings. Count them!
- 9 Keep a journal. Writing your thoughts and feelings can help clarify things and give you a renewed perspective.
- 10 Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
- 11 Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you worrying faster than being with chronic worrywarts.
- 12 Learn to live one day at a time.
- 13 Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
- 14 When scheduling your day, be realistic. Allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
- 15 Add an ounce of love to everything you do.

### On-Line Help — Just A Few Clicks Away

National Family Caregiver's Association - [www.nfcares.org](http://www.nfcares.org)

National Council on Aging - [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

Alzheimer's Assn. - [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)