



Elder Care at Home

Caregiving and Managing Complex Emotions

Recognizing and acknowledging your emotions is the first step to responding to them. Being a caregiver, you will likely go through several iterations of these following emotions:



Some Common Emotions You May Experience:

- **Grief:** Although you may still interact with your loved one, it still feels like your “losing” them to their illness. Try as often as you can to find happy moments to hold on to. Your loved one is still there even though it is hard to realize that sometimes.
- **Anxiety:** Being a family caregiver makes you feel like you are losing control. Breathe, practice mindfulness, and take it day by day, minute by minute.
- **Fear:** It is normal to feel scared about what is going to happen or what other people might think. Remind yourself that you are doing everything in your power to help, and do not let fear stop you in your tracks.
- **Anger:** You might feel anger at certain points while caregiving. The role that you have taken on is a difficult one, and feeling frustrated should be expected. When you are feeling angry try to give yourself a little break from the situation. Ask for some help so you can remove yourself from the stress.
- **Resentment:** Try not to resent your loved one. It is easy to do given the stressful situation you are in, but it is important to remember that your loved one is not trying to do anything to you personally. Remember that illnesses like Alzheimer’s change your loved one’s mood, personality, and behaviors.
- **Exhaustion:** With so many things going on, it’s no wonder why you might be having a hard time trying to find some rest. Be sure to prioritize sleep and give yourself 8 hours of it if possible. Before bed, quiet your mind by meditating, breathing, and/or praying. Writing your thoughts down before you go to bed can help, too.
- **Loneliness:** Caregiving can be lonely since it pulls you away from friends, especially if these friends aren’t in the same situation and cannot empathize. Try to find activities to do outside of caregiving. If you need to put your loved one in an adult day care program for a few hours to seek out some other activities, know that this is a completely normal solution. Use your resources.
- **Impatience:** Caring for a loved one has its challenges, and sometimes you don’t feel like putting up with them, especially if you have other things to do outside of your caregiving responsibilities. It is important to be easy on yourself and to remember that there is only so much in your control, so focus on the things you can control.

After acknowledging your feelings, it is equally important to talk to somebody about the array of emotions you are experiencing. You can either talk to a trusted friend or a mental health counselor. You will get the best results if you talk to a professional counselor since they will be able to provide you with the necessary coping techniques to respond to certain emotions.

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