

Caring for Yourself as You Care for Someone Else Change, Loss and Caregiving

Providing care for a friend or family member can be very exhausting at times. There are physical needs along with the emotions you feel as you adjust to changes in your friend or family member's life. With each change, you may experience feelings of loss. Coping with these feelings while you provide care for your friend or family member can be a challenge. Here are some of the feelings you may experience:

Reactions to Change and Loss

- Guilt
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Anger/frustration
- Feeling helpless
- Change in appetite

Steps for Coping with Change and Loss:

- **Talk about your feelings.**
 - Good friends, religious or spiritual care providers or family members can be a good source of support. Reach out to others – this will help reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Join a support group.**
 - Support groups can provide caregivers with the opportunity to share with other caregivers and learn from one another. For those who feel isolated by their caregiving responsibilities, you can join a group by telephone or on the Internet. Local organizations often provide support groups that you can attend in person.
- **Write your feelings down.**
 - Writing or journaling is not for everyone. For individuals who enjoy writing, it can be a wonderful way to express feelings of loss and grief. It doesn't matter what you write or how you spell – the process of putting your feelings down on paper is what's most important, not what the end result looks like.
- **Read a book on coping with grief.**
 - There are several books available on the issues of caregiving, self-help, grieving and loss. Your local library can help you locate these books. Also
 - Ask other caregivers what resources they have found to be helpful.
- **Get help when needed.**

- **You, as a caregiver, may experience physical, emotional and spiritual pain, and you may need to want help with this pain. You may need assistance meeting the demands of caregiving.**
 - If available, ask family and friend to provide some of the assistance you may need at this time.
 - Help can also be hired privately.
 - The Internet is another resource for finding help nationally and in your community.
 - Community organizations are a great resource for various types of help. Local religious organizations and organizations such as your local Cancer, Lung or Alzheimer's Association can help in many ways.

- **Make time for you.**
 - Do what works for you. For some individuals that may mean time spent with friends, family members or a group. Others may need time alone. There are still others who need to spend time doing something like gardening, planting a tree, or going for a walk. Do whatever it takes to express your feelings so you continue doing the things that are important to you.