

Someone I Love Is Ill



Caring for a parent, spouse, child, or other loved one with a serious illness can be an overwhelming task. As our population ages and hospital stays get shorter, more of us are filling this role. In the United States alone, nearly 66 million—or one in three adults—is a family caregiver.

This is a real shift for many of us as we find ourselves caring for the people who once cared for us. While it's a gift to be there for our loved ones, it takes a toll on us – physically, financially, emotionally and spiritually.

With already too many things on our plates, caregivers often sacrifice their own needs to find that time. Reading a good book, exercising at the gym, preparing a nutritious meal, meeting an old friend for coffee, these are the events that become expendable in the face of caring for a loved one. And yet, we often suffer for it.

When you are faced with juggling your own needs with those of your loved one, you may feel alone and isolated, and that your closely held beliefs and values are being challenged. However, there are things you can do on a daily basis to maintain your own health and quality of life. Here are just a few:

- Manage your time as efficiently as possible; use a calendar or appointment book.
- Delegate some tasks to others whenever possible, such as grocery shopping.
- Make time for yourself and keep up your own interests to avoid burnout.
- Learn all you can about your loved one's illness; take notes and keep records.
- Maintain open communication with the health care professionals who are caring for your loved one.
- Talk about your feelings with your family and friends.

It is crucial to your well-being to take advantage of the resources that are available for family caregivers. For instance:

- EmblemHealth's Care for the family caregiver program (<http://www.emblemhealth.com/careforthefamilycaregiver>) is an excellent resource.
- If you are a long distance family caregiver, you may need to establish relationships you can count on so that you are not constantly worrying. AARP has some tips here (http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-09-2010/pc_tips_for_long_distance_caregiver.html)
- Soul Care Project™ was created to help you meet the needs of your soul. It was written by professional counselors who understand the depth of the challenges you are experiencing, and respect your personal beliefs and values. You can connect with a counselor, trained as a health care chaplain, at [Chat with a Counselor](#).