

Caregiving for Family Members

Fifty-nine percent of the adult population either is or expects to be a family caregiver, and more than one quarter of the adult population has provided care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member or friend during the past year, according to the National Family Caregivers Association.

Caregiving for an aging family member along with trying to manage the overall demands of family, work, and community groups can be overwhelming at times. As an employee, parent, spouse and/or grandparent as well as caregiver, you may feel pulled in many different directions and it may be hard to do everything others want you to do. Below are some suggestions for balancing caregiving along with your other daily responsibilities:

Set priorities. Decide what is important, less important and in-between. You may need to say “no” even if it might disappoint others. Set priorities for your own needs, family needs, job needs and the older person’s needs. You may have to limit community service until you have fewer demands on your time. Priorities will change from day to day and week to week, but a ranked list will help set priorities for you.

Schedule a telephone hour during the day. This might be during lunch when the older person, family or doctors may call you.

Invest time or money in things that will help you manage tasks. Consider using a computer, bookkeeper, housekeeper or community resources.

Meet with other caregivers and self-help groups for support. Sharing eases tension, gives a new view of the

situation, increases understanding and builds support. Support groups help you feel less alone and they give you a chance to share what you have learned.

Accept your limitations. Get help from another family member, neighbors or community services when you need to take a break. What will you give up that will make life easier for you? Perhaps it is membership in a club that doesn’t interest you anymore or a committee that you have served on for a long time.

Make time for yourself. Set aside time on a regular basis to be alone, take a walk, exercise, visit with friends or just have quiet time, even for a short period. You will be more productive, have more energy and know yourself better. The person you care for will also benefit when you take time to renew yourself.

Keep good records. Caregiving requires the use of many services. Working with service providers, insurance companies and others is often confusing and time-consuming. Store contacts and information in one organizer or file and avoid over-relying on your memory. Ask questions and make notes as you talk in-person or over the telephone. Keep brochures, correspondence and other information provided by organizations and agencies in a three-ring binder or folder.

To contact UW CareLink Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, call: **866-598-3978** or visit www.apshealthlink.com (company code: UW)

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