



# **Taking Care** While Giving Care

Lowell General Hospital



*Complete connected care<sup>SM</sup>*

## The Role of Caregiver

More and more people are providing care to a parent, spouse, relative or friend. Caregivers are becoming more the norm in our society affecting people of all incomes, lifestyles and race.

Caregivers can be anyone involved in providing assistance to a person with an illness. The roles can be various and the tasks can be extensive with responsibilities ranging from telephone calls, to visits, to around the clock supervision and care. Being a caregiver can be like having a full time job. Coordinating care, managing medical issues, assisting with decision making, while also tending to housing, financial, legal and emotional issues can be overwhelming.

We acknowledge that taking on the role as a caregiver can be an extremely hard job during a very emotional time. One may feel that you are “on duty” 24/7 and feel like you don’t have the training or skills to handle what may seem like unending, daunting tasks.



## Impact of Caregiving

The range of emotions that one can experience is vast for a caretaker. Some common emotional experiences are: anger, anxiety, depression, fatigue, fear, gratitude, guilt, satisfaction and stress.

These emotions may be at any time during or after the caregiving experience and everyone handles emotions and stress differently. Being able to openly communicate your concerns is key in assisting you in this process.

When one or any of these emotions become too much to bear it may be time to consider additional help. A balanced life where you have time for yourself is crucial. Seeking professional assistance is not unreasonable, but necessary, if caregiving is becoming too demanding.



## Caregivers' Needs

Giving oneself permission to have time to regroup is important. Whether you are one to find stability from alone time, exercise, joining a group, talking with others, or finding strength from a spiritual venue it is vital to renew your energy.

Caregivers often neglect their own needs so be realistic and acknowledge what you can and cannot do. Caretakers who get the help, information and support they need are better prepared to take care of their loved ones.

Know that many people want to help but aren't sure how to proceed. Specify the type of help you need and delegate tasks. Find, establish and utilize your support systems. Don't feel like you have to do it all alone and know your limits.

Being a caretaker can also be a rewarding time and have positive benefits. Care for another may give you more time to be with a loved one, improve your relationship and appreciate the small things you always valued. However big or small of a role you play – the impact will be limitless.



## Resources

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles eligible employees to take unpaid job protected leave for specified family and medical reasons. Typically this paperwork is obtained from an employers' human resource department. A caretaker may access this to care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition.

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