

SELF-HELP CHECKLIST

- Learn to ask for help, don't take on more responsibility than you can handle.
- Take one thing at a time by prioritizing your tasks.
- Educate yourself about your loved one's condition to make informed decisions.
- Involve family members, hold routine meetings for review and future planning.
- Keep notes to remember timelines, write a journal to keep thoughts organized.
- Discuss difficult health care decisions proactively including end of life choices.
- Consider joining a support group.
- Locate resources in the community to get the support you need.
- Schedule time for yourself; bring joy and pleasure into your life without feeling guilty about it.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle; nutrition, physical activity and sleep are essential.
- Schedule time with friends and family.
- Seek professional help by contacting your Center EAP to proactively discuss issues of grief, loss, intense and overwhelming responsibilities, and anything else that weighs heavy on your mind.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

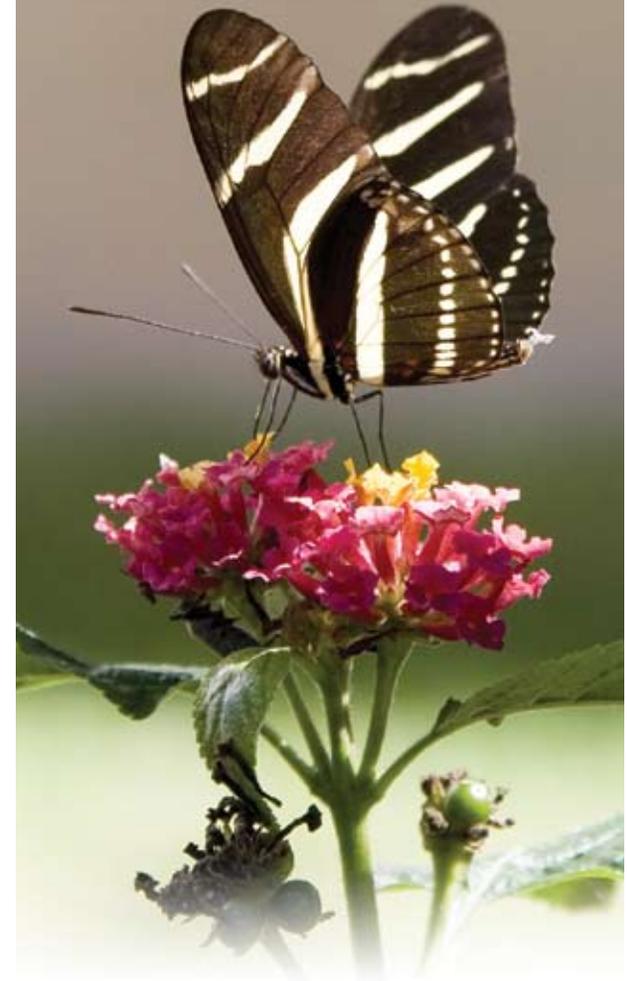
1. Agency Resource: www.ohp.nasa.gov
2. Introduction, Home Safety, Self-awareness referenced from Stresses of being a caregiver: JAMA, December 15, 1999- vol 282, No. 23
3. Caregiver population, Economic, Health and Work impacts referenced from National Family Caregiver Association www.nfcares.org/who/stats.cfm, National Family Caregivers Alliance www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp, Department of Health and Human Services, and American Association of Retired People (AARP)



Developed by
Dynamac Corporation for
NASA Office of the
Chief Health and Medical Officer
www.ohp.nasa.gov
10/01/2007

SP-2007-11-032-KSC

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



Coping with the
Stress of Being a
CAREGIVER

www.nasa.gov

Daily life can present abundant sources of stress. When you couple that with caring for a spouse, parent, sibling, or child who is disabled, chronically ill or aged, the stress of being a caregiver can become overwhelming. Research has recognized the impact of being a caregiver on people's health. Across the board, caregivers are at a greater risk of physical and emotional ailments than non-caregivers. Statistics show an increase in mortality rate, depression, anxiety, premature aging and other chronic conditions

CAREGIVER POPULATION

The caregiving population is described as the "sandwich generation" - taking care of children and parents. There are an estimated 50 million family caregivers in the U.S. comprising 13% of the U.S. workforce. Approximately 60% of caregivers are women in their mid forties; a statistic very much in line with the knowledge that stressors of life crises fall largely on female shoulders. Approximately 30% of family caregivers are seniors caring for others age 65 or older.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic value of family caregiving, "free-caregiving services", is estimated to be almost twice as much as what is spent on homecare and nursing home services. Caregiving families, especially those with a disabled member, have 15% lower median incomes than non-caregiving families. In 2000, a typical working family caregiver lost \$109 per day in wages and health benefits.

HEALTH IMPACT

Family caregivers can experience depression, anxiety, a sense of isolation, or sleep deprivation. Presence of physical ailments such as fatigue and undifferentiated pain are common. Failure to address one's own needs such as devoting time to exercise or meeting medical and dental appointments become a norm. Family caregivers are at an increased risk for excessive use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as a coping measure to address their emotional roller coaster.

CAREGIVING & WORK

The need for family caregivers will increase in the years ahead because the population of people over 65 is expected to increase at a rate of 2.3%, while the family members available to care for them will only increase at a rate of 0.8%. Therefore, the outcome of economic and health impacts of caregiving will become even more tangible. The NASA Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer (OCHMO) is committed to the welfare of the Agency's workforce. We recognize that managing the ever increasing work and family responsibilities is a significant issue. Assistance is available to the employees through Agency occupational health services by contacting your center's Health Clinic and/or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Be proactive about seeking these resources.



The following three checklists will assist you in developing a routine which allows you to prioritize time for yourself, family and friends without guilt.

VITAL INFORMATION CHECKLIST

- Names and telephone numbers of emergency contacts, health care providers, family, and friends.
- Medical conditions and treatment plans including medications, special diets, allergies, special equipment, living will or advance directive.
- Vital information such as financial accounts and insurance.
- Community agencies and other resources that assist in caregiving.

HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Secure hazardous products such as cleaning agents and poisons.
- Secure potentially dangerous objects such as knives, scissors and tools.
- Adjust the water heater temperature to avoid burns.
- Assess and adjust lighting inside the house and around the perimeter.
- Secure all windows and doors.
- Utilize identification and health bracelets.
- Secure all fire hazards such as stoves and other appliances, cigarettes, lighters and matches, and purchase an extinguisher.
- Secure all loose rugs and clear cluttered pathways.
- Secure prescription and over the counter medications.