



# Appreciating COPD Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

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## Avoiding COPD Caregiver Burnout

Caring for someone with COPD isn't easy. Physical exhaustion paired with the heartbreak of seeing your loved one struggle to take each breath is bound to lead to caregiver burnout.

As well as the tips listed below for preventing burnout, remember that talking to someone who understands about your struggles as a caregiver can be a huge help. Consider talking to a therapist or a fellow COPD caregiver to express your feelings of loss, frustration, resentment, anger or guilt. Keeping these perfectly normal feelings bottled up can be damaging to your mental health, and your ability to provide the best care you can.

Also remember that it's not selfish to take a break — it's healthy. Taking time to relax and recharge makes you a happier, more effective caregiver.

Read our COPD caregivers infographic below to learn more about caregiving and avoiding burnout.



90 MILLION  
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.<sup>1</sup>

1 MILLION AMERICANS  
are also caring for veterans from the IRAQ+AFGHANISTAN wars who have visible injuries and invisible wounds.

*True Dedication*  
A caregiver may help their loved one with **washing, dressing, eating** and other daily activities, as well as taking **medications**, getting to doctor's **appointments**, and so much more.

*Handle with CARE*  
Each member of our family has the ability to help a loved one with a chronic condition, illness, or disability that requires a variety of health care services.  
• Multiple sclerosis  
• Lupus  
• Fibromyalgia  
• Crohn's  
• Down's syndrome  
• Muscular dystrophy  
• Autism  
• Cancer  
• AIDS  
• Diabetes  
• HIV/AIDS  
• Alzheimer's  
• Parkinson's

*To young and YOUNG AT HEART*  
Because of America's aging population, the number of people needing care has been rising, and is expected to keep going up. By 2020, people 65 and older are expected to make up around **19%** of the American population, up from **14.8%** in 2008.<sup>2</sup>  
However, parents caring for children with disabilities are also in the family caregiver ranks. Children with conditions like **autism, muscular dystrophy** and **down's syndrome** all require a caregiver, often through into adulthood.

**CAREGIVER BURNOUT**  
Caregiver burnout is when a caregiver becomes emotionally and physically exhausted under the strain of caring for another person. This can manifest as:  
• Irritability and feeling blue  
• Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns  
• Withdrawing from friends and other loved ones  
• Abandoning activities you used to enjoy  
• Changes in appetite and/or weight  
• Depression and/or anxiety

Six tips to **AVOID BURNOUT**<sup>SM</sup>

**Stay HEALTHY**  
It's easy to spend so much time thinking about your loved one's health that you can completely forget about your own. Make sure you take care of yourself, too – not work, exercise and get enough sleep.

**Pursue your INTERESTS**  
Giving up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can leave you feeling empty. Try to find time to do the things you love to do. You might even find a way to share your interests with your loved one.

**Take time to DE-STRESS**  
Consider taking up a stress-reducing activity like yoga, meditation or deep breathing techniques that will help you let go of the stress of being a caregiver.

**Take A BREAK**  
Being a caregiver, although a labor of love, can be emotionally and physically draining. Give yourself time to be a caregiver every now and then to rest and recharge.

**Connect with other CAREGIVERS**  
Joining a support group or an online forum for caregivers can help you to feel less alone in your struggles and provide a sense of community.

**Seek and ACCEPT HELP**  
There is no shame in admitting you need help. Asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered, can lighten your load and make you better able to cope.

