



If you're a caregiver for a parent, child, spouse or another adult with a disease or disability, you're not alone. More than 60 million Americans provide full- or part-time unpaid care for family members with dementia, stroke, cancer, disabilities, mental illness and other special needs.

You stay busy with cooking, cleaning, laundry, toileting, bathing, medical care, running errands and driving to appointments.

In short, you're a doctor, nurse, taxi driver, housekeeper and psychologist all rolled into one.



## A tough job

Being a caregiver can be a very positive experience that makes your life more fulfilling. It can also put a real strain on you. In addition to fulfillment, you may have feelings of anger, resentment, frustration, stress, exhaustion, failure, isolation or sadness.

Studies show that caregivers who are under a strain are more likely to have headaches, back problems, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and gain weight. It could compromise your immune system or even shorten your life. Caregivers may also battle stress, depression and substance use.

### Steps for coping

You can take better care of others when you also take care of yourself, but you may find that's the hardest thing to do. It's important to:

- **Get support.** Consider joining a support group of other caregivers. You'll find validation, encouragement, friendship and help with problem-solving.
- **Take a break.** Put someone else in charge temporarily so you can walk away for awhile. This could be in-home respite care, an adult day care center or a short-term nursing home.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep and find time for some physical activity every day. Also focus on eating healthy foods and drinking enough water.
- **Stay in balance.** Treat yourself to some alone time each day for prayer, meditation or other spiritual practices that give you inner strength.

- **Accept help.** Think about specific ways others can pitch in, whether it's bringing a meal, bathing, running errands or driving to an appointment. Then don't be shy about asking others for assistance.
- **See your doctor.** Stay up-to-date with screenings and immunizations. Be sure to tell your doctor that you're a caregiver and share any concerns or symptoms you have.
- **Pat yourself on the back.** Give yourself credit for doing the very best you can in a difficult situation.

### Challenging circumstances

A variety of issues may put an extra strain on your situation. For example, caring for someone with dementia, a brain injury or at the end-of-life can be especially stressful.

Perhaps your relationship with the care recipient has always been difficult. You hoped this would be a time of healing, but now you only feel regret and discouragement.

Research shows that 40-70 percent of caregivers under strain show signs of depression that shouldn't be ignored. Symptoms include:

- Sleep problems
- Sadness
- Forgetfulness
- Pain that won't go away
- Fatigue
- Lack of interest in normal activities



# How we can help

Being a caregiver can impact your physical, mental and financial wellbeing. If you are feeling overwhelmed by stress, depression or difficult emotions, we can help.

Pine Rest's highly trained clinicians provide professional services with compassion and understanding. Our network of outpatient clinics throughout Michigan and Iowa can help you adopt new strategies for staying physically, spiritually and mentally healthy.

## Finding a support group

Many organizations provide support groups online and in person for caregivers facing different situations, including:

**Pine Rest, [pinerest.org](http://pinerest.org)**

**Alzheimer's Association, [alz.org](http://alz.org)**

**Brain Injury Association, [biausa.org](http://biausa.org)**

**CancerCare, [cancercares.org](http://cancercares.org)**

**Caregiver Resource Network,  
[caregiverresource.net](http://caregiverresource.net)**

**Caring Online, [caring.com](http://caring.com)**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI),  
[nami.org](http://nami.org)**

## Contact Information

Our outpatient locations in Michigan and Iowa offer assessment, psychosocial help and individual, group and family therapy. Call to schedule your first appointment.

**866.852.4001**

Individual therapy is also available through an online video connection similar to Facetime or Skype. Visit our Website for more information and to schedule your first appointment.

**[pinerest.org/teletherapy](http://pinerest.org/teletherapy)**

If you or your loved one are in crisis, please contact our contact center, which is staffed 24/7 by licensed clinicians.

**616.455.9200**

**800.678.5500**

**616.281.6446 (TTY line)**

## UNDERSTANDING

# Caregivers



For more information about mental health topics, please visit: **[pinerest.org/insights](http://pinerest.org/insights)**



**Taking care of others can be rewarding ... and stressful. Are you getting the support you need?**

