Self-Care for the Caregiver

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Cancer Lifeline
STRENGTH, DIGNITY, HOPE.
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“An individual doesn’t get cancer, a family does.”

— Terry Tempest Williams
Self-Care for Caregivers

- Role Changes
- The New Normal
- Emotions
- Grief
- Compassion Fatigue
- Communication and Intimacy
- Looking ahead
- Getting Help
- Resources
Role Changes

- Financial
- Household stability
- Partner/Lover to Caregiver
- Parent or child to Caregiver
The New Normal

Undergoing treatment

Changes in personal freedom

Loss of control

The need to ask for help

Being unable to maintain normal sexual function

Receiving sympathy

A need to be more patient

Depression and Anxiety

A decrease in income

Social isolation

Worrying loved ones

Disruption of daily routine

Visits to the doctor

Worry and embarrassment about hair loss, fatigue, or even the diagnosis itself

Taking orders from a doctor

Sleeplessness

Disruption of work and financial distress

Changes in the pace of life
Emotions

You are likely to come out of this experience as a different person who is stronger, wiser, and more realistic.

• Caregivers feel many of the same emotions that people with cancer do

• When the patient received treatment, caregivers experienced more distress than the patient
Anticipatory  Inhibited  Delayed
Risks to Well-Being

Tired and a bit burnt-out
• Guilt
• Feeling “done”

Tough Topics
• Grief
• Death

Social
• Hard to relate to others
• Talking about it too much or too little
• Isolation

What now?

Compassion Fatigue
Compassion Fatigue

- Physical
- Psychological
- Spiritual
- Social
Compassion Fatigue Prevention

Ask for Help
- People want to help
- Give specific tasks
- Support network.

Strengthen your Resilience
- Embrace change
- Believe in yourself

Mindfulness
- Keep your mind from getting “carried away”
- Return again and again to the present moment

Self-Care Plan
- Schedule into your routine
- Authentic and Sustainable
Examples of Self-Care

- Color in a coloring book, draw, paint
- Control what you can to minimize feeling overwhelmed
- Attend a support group
- Seek individual counseling
- Get out of your house, even if you just sit outside for 5 minutes
- Do a puzzle
- Take an exercise class
- Pray or meditate
- Eat/prepare healthy food
Control What You Can

- Stay present
- Stay away from the “shoulds, coulds and what ifs”
- Diet and exercise
- Make a do-able and realistic to-do list.
Barriers to Caring for the Caregiver

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation...”
-Audre Lorde

- Feels selfish
- Hard to find the time
- “Extra time”
- Can’t think of what to do
- Choosing a difficult activity
Communication

- Openness about emotions
- Make a plan for the future
- Same page
- Intimacy
“How are you doing?”

- Positive thinking
- Isolation
- Expectations of self and expectations from others
Intimacy

• Physical intimacy and connectedness

• Sexual Functioning

• Appointments and Intimacy
Looking Ahead

**Medical Decisions**
Life-sustaining treatments
DNR (do-not-resuscitate orders)

**Legal Decisions**
Rights and Responsibilities
Power of Attorney
Living will
Legal/financial documents
Property

**End of Life Care**
Funeral/burial arrangements
Donations and flowers
Getting Help

- Delegate tasks to people who want and are able to help
- Assign someone to be responsible for communication with loved ones such as send out updates, manage visiting times, and delegate tasks
- Apps and websites for scheduling
Resources

Support groups:

- Cancer Lifeline  [www.cancerlifeline.org](http://www.cancerlifeline.org)  (800) 255-5505
- Us Too  UsToo.org  877-978-7866

For Caregivers:

- Family Caregiver Alliance  [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)
- Help for Cancer Caregivers  [www.helpforcancercaregivers.org](http://www.helpforcancercaregivers.org)
- My Cancer Circle  [www.mycancercircle.lotsahelpinghands.com](http://www.mycancercircle.lotsahelpinghands.com)
- Cancer Care  [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

Communication and Scheduling meal trains and/or tasks with Loved Ones:

- Sign up Genius  [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com)
- Lotsa Helping Hands  [www.lotsahelpinghands.com](http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com)
- CaringBridge  [www.caringbridge.com](http://www.caringbridge.com)
- Meal Train  [www.mealtrain.com](http://www.mealtrain.com)
Resources

**Transportation:**
- Seattle Cancer Care Alliance: [www.seattlecca.org/travel-assistance-for-patients](http://www.seattlecca.org/travel-assistance-for-patients)

**DSHS Caregiver Resources:**
- [www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/caregiver-resources](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/caregiver-resources)

**Emotional Support:**
- [www.cancerlifeline.org](http://www.cancerlifeline.org)
- [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)
- [www.caring.com](http://www.caring.com)
- [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)
- [www.insicknessinhealth.blogspot.com/search/label/Caregiver](http://www.insicknessinhealth.blogspot.com/search/label/Caregiver)
- [www.cancerhopenetwork.org](http://www.cancerhopenetwork.org)
- [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)
Questions