



**Comfort
Keepers®**

Elevating the
Human SpiritSM



Caring for you, caring for others

Facing challenges as a family caregiver

44.6

Average hours per week a spouse/partner spends caring for their loved one.

Source: AARP

What you'll find in this guide

Learn useful information and insights to help you and your senior loved one navigate the challenges of caregiving.

Jump to a moment

Click on a category to the right to go directly to that section. Or, click on the arrows.

Reach out

Need to talk? Contact us with any of your questions; we can't wait to help you.



Info Center



Compassion
Fatigue



Being
Prepared



Open
Communication



Planned
Holiday

You can't pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first.

– Unknown



**75% of caregivers
are female.**

Source: Institute on Aging



Caring for you, Caring for others

Caring for someone you love can be a fulfilling experience that brings your family closer together. However, it isn't healthy to ignore the feelings of loss, stress, and physical strain that accompany this kind of family caregiving. We've created this informational resource guide to help you stay emotionally and physically healthy while you care for your senior loved one. It's a great joy to care for others. This guide can help you care for yourself and become attuned to your own needs and feelings.

TAKEAWAY
Read: *The Value of Respite Care*





What you need to know

Resources to help you prepare and plan



Compassion
Fatigue

Understanding compassion fatigue

What is compassion fatigue?

Care and empathy have no limit; we can accomplish amazing things when love is our motivation. But caregivers can't perform Herculean feats of care without also caring for themselves. In fact, it's easy, and quite common, for family caregivers to fall into chronic stress and experience unpleasant feelings concerning the care they're giving. This feeling is called compassion fatigue, and it stems from overexerting your mental, physical, and emotional capacity for others without recentering and recharging yourself in between.



What are common signs of compassionate fatigue?

Exhaustion
(physical and/or emotional)

Lower threshold for sympathy
or empathy

Feeling dread or guilt

Irritability, anger, or anxiety

Headaches

Sleep trouble

Self-isolation

Feeling disconnected

Indecisiveness

Trouble finding meaning
in caregiving

Strife in other relationships

Source: [DailyCaring.com](https://www.dailycaring.com)

53%

of caregivers report higher levels of
emotional stress if they feel they had no
choice in taking on the caregiving role.

Source: AARP and National Alliance on Caregiving

Counteracting compassion fatigue

Be aware of changes in your level of compassion fatigue

Make self-care a priority

Spend time with friends

Join a support group

Write in a journal

Use positive ways to cope with stress

Spend time on your hobbies

Speak with a counselor or therapist



Compassion
Fatigue

Understanding compassion fatigue

Why is compassion fatigue dangerous?

When you feel compassion fatigue, it can strain your relationships, break down communication, and provoke resentment toward yourself and the people you care about. Compassion fatigue is like an infection; it won't go away without proper treatment.

How to cope with compassion fatigue

Imagine holding a five pound dumbbell. The dumbbell is not very heavy at first; you can carry it with ease. Now, imagine that you've held that dumbbell for a long time--you can feel the strain in your arm, and the weight of it has become uncomfortable. In some ways, this represents the negative effects of caring for others without taking breaks to care for yourself. To be strong and healthy, you have to learn to put down the weight of your caregiving from time to time.

Peace of mind in being prepared

As a caregiver, juggling the health and needs of your loved one can be daunting. By making efforts to organize in advance, you and your loved one can stay on the same page and ease the stress that decision-making and preparation can cause. Planning in advance with your loved one means that his or her preferences are considered. This way, your loved one feels heard in circumstances of finances, physician visits, loss of driving privileges, and preventing home incidents.

Physician visits

"Do you have any questions?"

It can be difficult to think of questions to ask on the spot; often, people underutilize the chance to ask questions of their physicians. If you're accompanying your loved one to a doctor's appointment, or even if she or he is going alone, it's beneficial to prepare questions for the doctor in advance. We created a [list of questions](#) to help you get started.

Home incidents

Many family caregivers worry about their senior loved one when she or he is home alone. People over 65 have a significant chance of hurting themselves in a fall or other home incident. You can help your loved one make his or her home a safe and accessible space by making sure that there is ample walking space between furniture and good lighting throughout the home. You can also identify and fix tripping hazards like rugs, loose carpet, or uneven ground.



Being
Prepared





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Peace of mind in being prepared

Loss of driving privileges

In our Quality of Life guide, we talked about the challenges that come with the loss of driving privileges. We discussed common signs that driving may no longer be a safe option, and how to initiate that conversation with your loved one. Another consideration when your loved one has given up his or her car keys is physical mobility. As seniors age, it can become more difficult to get in and out of a vehicle safely and quickly. Fortunately, there are inexpensive tools that can help. For example, you could consider a swivel seat cushion or a seatbelt extender if your senior deals with limited shoulder or torso mobility.

Becoming a better caregiver

What Is respite care?

For family caregivers, accepting help is a necessity. Even with a strong support system in place, there are times when caregivers take on too much responsibility to avoid placing a burden on those around them. Many caregivers aren't aware that in-home care and adult care centers offer respite care to families in this situation. When you accept help and give yourself a break from your caregiving duties, you refresh your mind and body—and it makes you a better caregiver overall.

How do you get started with respite care?

The goal of respite care is to give you relief from your care responsibilities. Because every family's situation is different, respite care can take many forms and durations. You can start by thinking, "How much time do I need to take so that I can take care of myself and give the best care possible?" Once you know the amount of time that would help you, you can look for the care service to best suit your family's needs. In-home care options like Comfort Keepers can facilitate a very flexible schedule for care. Whether you need a few hours of care or a full week to take a vacation, a well-trained caregiver will care for your loved one while offering safety and true companionship.



Being
Prepared



"The mistake many caregivers make is that they wait too long."

– Iris Waichler, Author of
*Role Reversal: How To Take Care of
Yourself and Your Aging Parents*



Open
Communication



Communication is key

Starting family conversations

Keeping your family on the same page regarding your loved one's care can feel like walking a tightrope. Factors of distance, involvement, interpersonal relationships, and availability can make coordination and conversations difficult to have. But starting a family conversation is easier than you think.

Division of caregiving responsibilities

In a perfect world, every family member would be able to give an equal amount of time and care for their senior loved one, but issues of distance, work, and family schedules rarely make that possible. To maintain family harmony, it's important that family members:

1. Accept the amount of help that each person can give
2. Let the family member in closest proximity be the care lead
3. Be communicative and share problems when they start, not after they've built up
4. Know how to resolve issues with family openly, without talking behind backs
5. Be supportive of each other and acknowledge the strengths each person brings

TAKEAWAY

Read: [Starting the Conversation](#)





Open
Communication

Helping a loved one with feelings of loss

Communicating through grief and depression

Caring for a family member who's recently lost a spouse is difficult on several fronts. Supporting and caring for a grieving person while facing your own grief is dismaying and often painful. During this time, it is more important than ever to rely on those around you for emotional support. This can mean friends, other family members, support groups in your area, or counseling sessions. Give yourself time to grieve away from your loved one; this can help avoid a hardened heart when your loved one turns to you for care and emotional support.

When the grip of loss is strongest, it's important to remember that such powerful feelings are impossible to avoid. They command to be felt. While grief can be paralyzing, making efforts to focus on happy memories, plan for the future, and accepting your limits are vital to helping yourself and those you care for.



TAKEAWAY

Read: *How to Help Seniors Cope with Loss*
Read: *Coping with Loss During the Holidays*



Remove the worry from taking a trip

Prepare and relax

When caring for others, it can be difficult to put your obligations out of your mind and relax. On a vacation or holiday trip, it's particularly important for caregivers to focus on themselves and take a well-deserved break. As we've said before, peace of mind comes from preparedness. Preparing for an extended time away from your senior loved one can seem intimidating, but it should never stop you from taking time for yourself.

When others step in to care for your loved one while you're gone, you want to equip them with everything they could need. Consider preparing a caregiver notebook, which includes important information about routines, medicines, physician contact information, dietary guidelines, and legal paperwork in case of emergency.

If you are the primary caregiver for your loved one, remember that finding help while you're gone doesn't have to be difficult. In-home care, like the services provided by Comfort Keepers, can be an excellent resource. With the assistance of compassionate and empathetic caregivers, you can be sure that your loved one is receiving holistic care that lifts their spirits.



Planned
Holiday





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More resources

About Comfort Keepers

FAQs about Home Care:
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

**The Comfort Keepers
Difference:**
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Interactive Caregiving:
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Why Comfort Keepers:
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Caring for the Caregiver:
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Quality of Life:
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Mental Health and Well-Being
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

Family caregiver resources

**Info Center for
Caregiver Resources:**
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

**Elderly Home Care
and Depression:**
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

**Cost-Effective Option for Aging
in Place:**
[ComfortKeepers.ca](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca)

What's next?

To help you create a clear path for moving forward, we've included resource links to help you research caregiving options. If you ever have questions—or just want someone to talk to—please don't hesitate to reach out. Thanks for taking the time to read our guide, and remember to look for the joy in every moment of life.

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