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# Caregiver's CORNER

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Seeking support and maintaining your own health is key to managing your role as a caregiver. Most caregivers find it difficult to ask others for help. As a result, sometimes caregivers end up needing care themselves and are no longer able to care for their loved one. Using some type of respite care before you become exhausted, isolated or overwhelmed would be ideal.

Respite care can offer short-term breaks that can help relieve stress and restore energy for the caregiver. Sometimes family members can provide this respite care. Other options can be available as well. Decide what would help you the most. Is it help with transportation? Regular time away? Support in some other area? And what types of things would this person be required to do while staying with your care receiver? Would they need to just visit, assist with walking, eating or medications? Answering these questions can help you determine what type of respite care you should be looking for.

Family members and friends might be willing to stay while you run errands, take a break, or a short vacation. Sometimes it is hard for families to share responsibilities, but it is great if this works. If your family is at a distance it is helpful to talk regularly and openly via phone or internet. When they are not involved on a daily basis this is the only way they can know what is going on. Talk with them about what they can reasonably do to help out. Maybe making an online calendar to organize schedules can be helpful.

If you have a friend who also is a caregiver, perhaps you can trade respite services occasionally. This can reduce cost and help each other out too.

And of course, participate in a support group if at all possible. Learning how other families cope can be so helpful. They allow you to meet others in situations much like yours. You can talk, vent, laugh and exchange tips with people who understand what you are going through.

If in-home respite is an option it can be provided by volunteers if you have an organization in your community like Interfaith Caregivers. Paid help through home health services can be a life saver. They can perform those tasks that can allow you to continue to be the spouse/child while they do some of the nursing or personal hands on duties, such as bathing, shaving, dressing etc. Homemaker services support meal preparation, shopping and housekeeping.

There are also adult day centers. Some health care centers provide this for a fee. St. Luke's in Blue Earth offers this as does Lakeview Health Services in Fairmont. Planned activities can offer stimulation, social contact and be in a safe, supportive and cheerful environment. Healthy snacks and meals are also provided.

If leaving home is just not possible for you check the internet for online groups, message boards and sites that provide information that can provide you with much-needed support.

No one can be a caregiver 24-7 without having breaks and remain healthy. Take care of yourself and check out respite care today.

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