

# THE COPD CAREGIVER



**I**t is often seen as the greatest expression of love to offer yourself as a caregiver. Being a caregiver can be hard, depending on the stage of a chronic condition. For some, this role is sudden and for others it evolves over time. Being a caregiver takes time and patience. It may present emotional challenges and require educating yourself about the condition. These challenges can strengthen the relationship. A caregiver's attitude can strongly influence the patient's outlook.

## BALANCE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

It's natural to want to make your loved one your main focus. However, your well-being is very important to both of you. If you feel drained or unwell, you will have a difficult time being an effective caregiver. It is important to remember to take care of your needs as well.

Have you thought about the expectations you have accepted in your role as a caregiver? Are they realistic? Do you sometimes feel guilty or overwhelmed when you don't meet these expectations? Identifying realistic expectations and goals can help you stay focused on the important aspects of your role.

## TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Some caregivers report feeling guilty for taking the time to do something enjoyable. It's natural to have these feelings. It may help to think about what your loved one would want for you. Would s/he encourage you to continue to do the things that make you happy? How about the things that help you relax? Your state of emotional and physical health plays an important role in caregiving. You'll approach things with a more positive attitude. It may result in more energy and focus. And best of all – your positive outlook will influence your loved one's attitude and willingness to work on their health goals.



### LEARN ABOUT COPD

Understanding COPD and its triggers is also very important. Being informed will help you feel prepared for your role as a caregiver. There are many resources available to learn about COPD. Your loved one's doctor is a great resource. You can also connect with other caregivers through support groups both online and in person. You can also visit well-known websites that offer a lot of information such as:

- COPD Foundation  
[www.copdfoundation.org](http://www.copdfoundation.org)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at  
[www.nhlbi.gov](http://www.nhlbi.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**BE AWARE IF  
CAREGIVING IS  
PUTTING TOO  
MUCH STRESS ON  
YOU.**

**FIND SUPPORT TO  
HELP YOU  
MANAGE.**

## Signs of Caregiver Stress

When you find little time to devote to your own needs, it may lead to stress and depression. Here are some warning signs that indicate you might be under too much stress:

- Feeling sad or worried
- Feeling tired most of the time
- Having trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Gaining or losing weight
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- Being irritable or easily angered

If you find yourself feeling stressed, try to find time for yourself. You may want to reach out to your doctor to discuss your symptoms. Staying in contact with your friends and family can also be helpful. Making time for hobbies you enjoy may reduce your stress level.



Finding the support you need and connecting with available resources may feel overwhelming. You have so much on your plate already.

The Health Plan has a dedicated team ready to help members and their caregivers find available resources. You can call the Health Plan to speak with someone about caregiver resources at 1-888-211-9913 from 8:00am - 4:00pm Monday through Friday.