Appreciating Lupus Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Avoiding Lupus Caregiver Burnout

Lupus is an unpredictable illness that can be as much of an emotional rollercoaster for the caregiver as it is for the person with the diagnosis. The physical and emotional impacts of caring for someone with lupus can take their toll; it’s important to do all you can to avoid caregiver burnout.

On top of the tips listed below for avoiding burnout, remember that talking to someone about your experience as a caregiver can lift a huge weight off your shoulders. Whether you talk to a therapist, a fellow lupus caregiver, or someone from a support organization, make sure you express your feelings of loss, frustration, resentment, anger or guilt with someone — keeping them bottled up can be damaging to your mental health, and your ability to provide the best care you can.

Also remember to look for the positives. Perhaps caring for your loved one has strengthened the bond the two of you have, or helped you to see what’s really important in life. Every cloud has a silver lining.

Read our lupus caregivers infographic below to learn more about caregiving and avoiding burnout.

Family
CARE GIVERS MONTH

November 2014
An infographic by
new*life*outlook

90 MILLION

Americans are *caregivers* for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way[i]

1 MILLION AMERICANS

are also caring for veterans from the
IRAQ+AFGHANISTAN
wars who have various injuries and mental illnesses.

True Dedication

A caregiver may help their loved one with **washing**, **dressing**, **eating** and other daily activities, as well as taking **medications**, getting to doctors **appointments**, and so much more.

Handle with CARE

Family members who require care may be elderly or have a disability or chronic condition. Some of the conditions that may cause a person to require care include:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Fibromyalgia
- COPD
- Down's syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy
- Autism
- Cancer
- ALS
- Epilepsy
- HIV/Aids
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Parkinson's

The young and YOUNG AT HEART

Because of America's aging population, the number of people needing care has been rising, and is expected to keep going up.

By 2030 people *65 and older* are expected to make up around **19%** of the American population, up from **12.9%** in 2009.[ii]

However, parents caring for children with disabilities are also in the family caregiver ranks. Children with conditions like **autism**, **muscular dystrophy** and **down's syndrome** all require a caregiver, often through into adulthood.

CAREGIVER BURNOUT[iii]

Caregiver burnout is when a caregiver becomes emotionally and physically exhausted under the strain of caring for another person. This can manifest as:

- Irritability and feeling blue
- Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns
- Withdrawing from friends and other loved ones
- Abandoning activities you used to enjoy
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Depression and/or anxiety

Six tips to
AVOID BURNOUT[iv, v]

Stay HEALTHY

It's easy to spend so much time thinking about your loved one's health that you completely forget about your own. Make sure you look after yourself, too – eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep.

Pursue your INTERESTS

Giving up on your hobbies and interests because of your caregiving duties can take a toll on your mental health and could lead you to resent your loved one. Make time to do things you enjoy.

Take time to DE-STRESS

Consider taking up a stress-reducing activity like yoga, meditation or deep-breathing techniques, that will help you let go of the stresses of being a caregiver.

Take A BREAK

Being a caregiver, although a labor of love, can be emotionally and physically draining. Take time out from being a caregiver every now and then to rest and recharge.

Connect with other CAREGIVERS

Joining a support group or an online forum for caregivers can help you to feel less alone in your struggles and provide a sense of community.

Seek and ACCEPT HELP

There's no shame in admitting you need help. Asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered, can lighten your load and make you better able to cope.

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November is National Family Caregivers Month. **Share this** to show your support for the many millions of dedicated Americans who selflessly provide care for their loved ones.

Resources:

[i] http://www.caregiveraction.org/national-family-caregiver-month/

[ii] http://www.aoa.acl.gov/Aging_Statistics/index.aspx

[iii] http://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/caregiver-burnout

[iv] http://www.helpguide.org/articles/caregiving/caregiving-support-and-help.htm

[v] http://www.caregiveraction.org/resources/ten-tips/