

## Sharing Your Care - Sep 2018

### Emotions of Caregiving

Caregiving is an emotional journey for the caregiver and the person receiving the care. Throughout the journey, it is easy to become so involved in the physical caregiving that we don't make time to acknowledge and work through the emotions. Often times a caregiver can experience a wide range of emotions in a very short time span. The person being cared for also experiences all these emotions and as the caregiver, you want to be able to offer love, reassurance, and support to them. To be able to support others, first you must care for yourself emotionally.

Here are some of the common, often hard to admit, feelings caregivers experience and suggestions for coping.

**Ambivalence** - The feeling of both wanting to do the caregiving and the feeling of not wanting to do it.

Coping: Allow yourself to feel both sets of feelings; everyone has these feelings sometimes. They won't last forever.

**Anger** – Have you ever “lost it” while providing care? Anger and frustration are a normal part of being around someone who needs help on an ongoing basis. Sometimes anger “just comes out”.

Coping: Forgive yourself and find constructive ways to express yourself. Learn to walk away and give yourself a “time out” Identify supportive people you can talk to who will listen to you vent about what happened.

**Depression/Sadness** – Caregivers are at risk of depression. Sometimes this is a feeling of hopelessness, the inability to sleep or sleeping too much, struggling to get up and face another day or wanting to cry.

Coping: Depression is treatable. If you think you may be depressed, talk to your physician, join a caregiver support group, find a counselor who understands caregiving. Include an exercise program as moving your body is a proven way to relieve some of the symptoms of depression.

**Fear** – Caregivers take on a huge amount of responsibility and along with that comes the fear of what could happen. What if something happens to me? Am I responsible for things that go wrong? What if I can't do it anymore?

Coping: It's important to have contingency plans; so it might make sense to have a back-up caregiver in place in case something happens to you. Check into area homes/facilities that offer respite care and think about how you would handle a medical emergency based on the disabilities the person you're caring for has. It is also helpful to talk with someone who knows your situation.

**Loneliness** – The longer you are a caregiver, the more isolated you can become. It is quite easy to lose your sense of self and see yourself only as a caregiver.

Coping: Learn about resources from your local Area Agency on Aging (CVCOA) about respite programs or Adult Day programs that can help you get a well-deserved break. Look at your wider circle of family, friends, neighbors and spiritual connections to see where you might get some nurturing.

These are just a few of the emotions involved in being a caregiver; for more information go to <https://www.caregiver.org/emotional-side-caregiving>

Tips for getting the support needed to be a successful caregiver:

- Reach out to family, friends and neighbors for support and someone to talk to
- Talk with your Physician
- Join a Caregiver Support Group
- Central VT Council on Aging (CVCOA) can help with determining what resources are available
- Central VT Home Health and Hospice (CVHHH) can help with determining what resources are available
- Project Independence Adult Day Program – offers services Mon – Fri from 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM

The information in this article comes from personal experience and from Family Caregiver Alliance.  
(<https://www.caregiver.org>)