



Area Agency on Aging, PSA 2

Caregiving Series

WORK AND CAREGIVING

I've been awakened by Mom every night this week and just can't drag myself into work today. I don't know how much longer I can keep my job.

Most of the 22 to 25 million caregivers across the country are also working full or part time. Approximately 25% to 30% have taken time off from work without pay, and about 15% have given up jobs to care for a loved one. Leaving a job can cause severe financial strain, and down the line, a sporadic employment pattern impacts the caregiver's own financial future.

Many adult children consider caring for their parents the "right thing to do," and if the relationship has been good, they find caregiving to be a mutually rewarding experience. However, if the past relationship has not been good, old issues will continue to cause conflict and caregiving may be a thankless task. In the words of Tish Sommers, founder of OWL (Older Women's League), "Love doesn't grow when guilt is the motivator." Working caregivers must create an extensive support system and a plan to balance the responsibilities of work and caregiving.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT

- Enlist family members who can do hands-on care or contribute financially to the cost of care.
- Enlist the help of friends or neighbors who are willing to help regularly.
- Designate one or two individuals who can help occasionally with urgent needs while you are at work.
- Arrange for subsidized or private-pay services to do housekeeping, personal care, or chores.

ON THE JOB

- Let your employer and co-workers know you have caregiving responsibilities.
- Arrange in advance for time off whenever possible.
- Keep your employer informed of situations that may require you to be absent or late with minimal notice.
- Keep your work up to date in case you need to be away from work unexpectedly.
- Explore flex-time, job-sharing, or part-time work with your employer.
- Offer to work a less desirable shift.
- Conduct caregiving activities outside of work hours.
- Explore the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The Act entitles eligible individuals a maximum of 12 weeks of unpaid leave per 12-month period for family caregiving. See eligibility requirements at www.dol.gov/esa.

CARE FOR YOURSELF

- Take a few minutes each morning to organize your day.
- Cut down on outside commitments.
- Delegate responsibilities when you can.
- Set limits on how much you will do.
- Reserve time for your spouse and children.
- Don't deplete your energy by skipping meals or relying on "fast food."
- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Take time off for play and recreation.
- Keep up your connections with friends.
- Talk with a trusted friend, professional counselor, employee assistance staff person, or spiritual advisor about your needs and concerns.



*For more information or a list of titles in this series,
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