

Being a caregiver to someone diagnosed with cancer can be quite the juggling act. Roles, responsibilities, and commitments that were in place before cancer don't just go away. No one checks their schedule for a good place to fit in this vital, yet time-consuming role. A cancer diagnosis often comes without warning and without regard for the demands of your time. It can be frustrating to try to fit in all the demands and expectations of what you want to, should, and need to do.

NEW ROLES

A caregiver may suddenly find themselves parenting a parent, being the cook/housekeeper, becoming the breadwinner, or all of the above. Caregivers likely will have to take on new jobs, at least at first. This can be overwhelming. You may not be able to drop your old roles and duties. For example, if you are an adult child with your own children to care for. It is normal to feel like you are not doing any of the roles well anymore. Some days the plates you've been juggling feel like they are crashing down. You aren't alone in learning how to step into new roles. You will need to ask for guidance and get help when you can. You may find that your ability to take on roles or activities may increase over time. But in the meantime, be prepared for this new balancing act.

BALANCE YOUR TIME

- **Set priorities.** Decide what is important, what can be let go, and what needs to be changed. You may have to learn to say “no” to some things (school or work potlucks) and ask for help with others (carpooling). People will understand. They may even surprise you in their willingness to step up and help.
- **Accept your limitations.** You can only do so much. Ask for help from other family members, neighbors, church, and community services. At times, you need to be there for your loved one in a way only you can, and it is okay to let others help where they can (chores, errands, homecare assistance).
- **Make time for yourself.** It is important to set aside time for your health and mental health. Try to find time to be alone. Take a walk, exercise, read a book, watch a favorite television show, or go to a movie. You need this time to


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recharge and to keep from burning out. It may seem like a luxury, but it is a necessity.

- **Keep good records.** Staying organized can help you manage—and balance—your time better. In addition to appointments and treatments, it is important to keep track of useful contacts, agency resources, insurance information, and health care information. This will let you better manage the overall situation.
- **Engage others.** In addition to friends and family, this may include your employer (or school). Make them aware of your situation so you both can adjust if needed based on your caregiver role. This may include learning more about the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other workplace policies (vacation, sick leave).

AVOID CAREGIVER BURNOUT

As a caregiver, you may be so focused on balancing the new roles and demands in your life that you forget to take care of yourself. You may begin to feel out of control. It is okay to know your own strengths and limitations, to recognize when you need help, and to ask for help. Taking time for you and setting priorities will help you regain some control. It will also give you more time and energy to be the caregiver you would like to be.

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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