

It is quite normal and expected for caregivers to feel guilty. You may feel guilt for:

- not spending enough time with your loved one
- not taking care of yourself or other loved ones
- resenting your caregiver role

The burden on caregivers is often a silent one. Often support is given to the person with cancer, while the caregiver feels variety of emotions in the background. Guilt can be motivating or debilitating. Your control comes in how you respond to it.

CANCER IS A FAMILY'S DIAGNOSIS

Caregivers are affected in significant ways. There are many demands and emotional roller coasters. It is okay to admit that you are feeling guilty or even angry at times. This does not make you less of a caregiver. Both you and your loved one are learning to adjust to a “new normal,” which can be challenging. This is understandable and very common. No one asks for cancer to enter their lives and to step into a caregiver role so abruptly. In particular, caregivers may even feel guilty for wanting to take “time off,” (for example, spending time alone or visiting a friend). Remember that you need to take care of yourself, so you can continue to support your loved one.

RECOGNIZE THE FEELING OF GUILT

It is important to pay attention to guilt and other underlying feelings. You may feel resentment (“*I hate to admit it, but my wife’s cancer has turned our lives upside down*”). You may feel anger (“*If he had stopped smoking, we wouldn’t be dealing with this*”). Finally, you may feel lonely (“*None of my friends know what it is like to care for a parent with cancer*”). It is okay to dislike the role of caregiving at times and still love the person you are caring for. If you notice that guilt or other negative emotions are getting in the way of what you need to do or lasting for a majority of your days, reach out to your health care team to discuss support options.

TIPS TO MANAGE CAREGIVER GUILT

- **Give yourself a break.** You will have good and bad days. Give yourself permission to feel these feelings and to schedule time for yourself. This self-care is vital to your caring for your loved one physically and emotionally.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

1-888-793-9355



MyLifeLine is CSC's private, online community where patients and caregivers are able to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond.

You can use this website to:

- Keep friends and family informed and involved through a personalized blog. You can ask for help with rides, meals, etc. in the Helping Center on your page. As a caregiver, your loved one can give you access as an Assigned Care Coordinator to run their page.
- Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Discussion boards are available 24/7 and are monitored by a licensed professional.
- Learn more about cancer through **Frankly Speaking About Cancer**[®] resources.

Sign up at **MyLifeLine.org**.

■ **Ask for help.** Ask friends/family to help with activities, come visit, or simply listen on the phone. Create your own network to help avoid isolation. There are websites that can help you share your loved one's cancer information and get the help you need.

■ **Seek out help from community resources.** Whether for you or to assist you in caregiving, ask your health care team or oncology social worker for assistance in locating local resources. Support groups can help you feel less alone and gain helpful resources and information. Counseling with a mental health provider—even just a few sessions—can also be helpful.

■ **Embrace the “new normal.”** Life may not go back to being the exact same as it was for you and your loved one. Rather than feeling guilty or resentful of missing what was, it can be helpful to find meaning in what life is right now. Try to find new opportunities, new goals, or new ways of appreciating. You and your loved one can embrace this challenge together and increase control over your emotions and daily life.

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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