Appreciating Rheumatoid Arthritis Caregivers

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

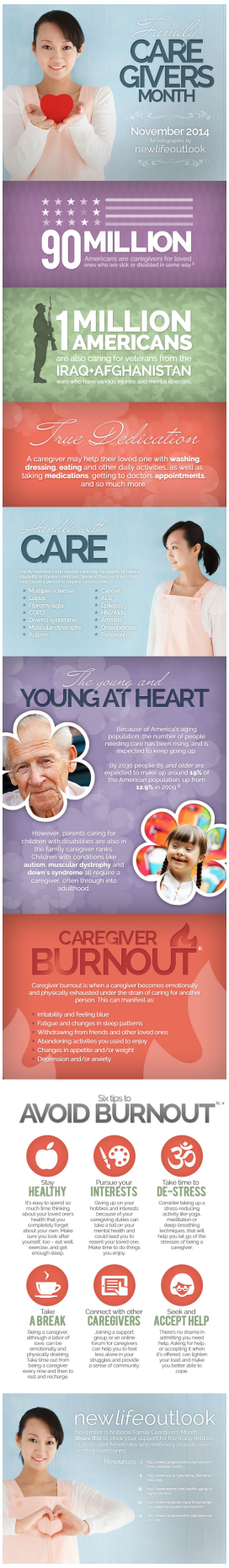
Avoiding Caregiver Burnout

As well as causing pain, rheumatoid arthritis can also cause symptoms like depression, anxiety and anger. As a caregiver for someone with RA, the physical strain combined with the heartbreak of watching someone you love struggling can easily lead to caregiver burnout.

In addition to the tips listed below for preventing burnout, remember that feelings of frustration, anger, resentment, and as a result of these, guilt, are all normal emotions to experience as a caregiver.

Talk about these feelings with someone who will understand, whether that person is a therapist, a fellow RA caregiver, or a someone at a support organization. Stifling these emotions isn’t good for your mental health, and can make you a less effective caregiver.

Also remember that your best is all you can do. Your loved one appreciates your support, probably more than you know.


Family
CARE GIVERS MONTH
November 2014
An infographic by
newlifeoutlook
90 MILLION
Americans are caregivers for loved ones who are sick or disabled in some way.[1]
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.
Loved 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
Downs 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.[2]
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
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[3, 4]
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 kind-hearted Americans who selflessly provide care for their loved ones.
Resources:
http://www.caregiveraction.org/national-family-caregiver-month
http://www.aoa.acl.gov/aging_statistics/profile/index.aspx
http://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/guide/caregiver-burnout
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/01/caregiving-resources-and-help_n_4187.html
http://www.caregiveraction.org/resources/tips-tools