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Supporting a person with dementia requires time and energy. While it can be a rewarding experience, it can also be demanding and stressful. Knowing and recognizing signs of stress in yourself or someone you care about is the first step towards taking action.

If the following symptoms occur, call your doctor or contact your local Alzheimer Society for help.

10 signs of caregiver stress

**Sign 1** Denial
...about the disease and its effect on the person with the disease.
“Everyone is overreacting. I know Mom will get better.”

**Sign 2** Anger
...at the person with dementia, yourself and others.
“If he asks me that question once more I will scream!”

**Sign 3** Withdrawing socially
...you no longer want to stay in touch with friends or participate in activities you once enjoyed.
“I don’t care about getting together with friends anymore.”

**Sign 4** Anxiety
...about facing another day and what the future holds.
“I’m worried about what will happen when I can no longer provide care.”

**Sign 5** Depression
...you feel sad and hopeless much of the time.
“I don’t care anymore. What is wrong with me?”

**Sign 6** Exhaustion
...you barely have the energy to complete your daily tasks.
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**Sign 7** Sleeplessness
...you wake up in the middle of the night or have nightmares and stressful dreams.
“I rarely sleep through the night, and don’t feel refreshed in the morning.”

**Sign 8** Emotional reactions
...you cry at minor upsets; you are often irritable.
“I cried when there was no milk for my coffee this morning. Then I yelled at my son.”

**Sign 9** Lack of concentration
...you have trouble focusing and you find it difficult completing complex tasks.
“I used to do the daily crossword. Now I am lucky if I can solve half of it.”

**Sign 10** Health problems
...you may lose or gain weight, get sick more often (colds, flu), or develop chronic health problems (backaches, high blood pressure).
“Since the spring, I have had either a cold or the flu. I just can’t seem to shake them.”

10 ways to reduce caregiver stress

As a caregiver, you need to take care of yourself. You may well be the most important person in the life of someone with dementia. The suggestions below will help maintain your health and well-being.

Learn about the disease
Knowing as much as you can about the disease and care strategies will prepare you for the dementia journey. Understanding how the disease affects the person will help you comprehend and adapt to the changes.

Be realistic...about the disease
It is important, though difficult, to be realistic about the disease and how it will affect the person over time. Once you are realistic, it will be easier for you to adjust your expectations.

Accept your feelings
When caring for a person with dementia, you will have many mixed feelings. In a single day, you may feel content, angry, guilty, happy, sad, embarrassed, afraid and helpless. These feelings may be confusing. But they are normal. Recognize that you are doing the best you can.

Share information and feelings with others
Sharing information about the disease with family and friends will help them understand what is happening and prepare them to provide the help and support you need.

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