

ask the expert

how to recognize caregiver stress

As a social worker and professional caregiver, I know how important it is to recognize stress. If I am to be the “best me” and be present as a caregiver, I must take care of myself.



How do you know when you need “me time”? Here are a few important questions to ask:

- Am I feeling run down or tired?
- How is my mood...low/depressed, irritable? Am I overreacting to this slow checkout line?
- How is my sleep? Am I restless, having trouble falling asleep, or not sleeping at all?
- How is my health? When was my last doctor appointment?
- How is my concentration? Am I focused? Have I taken care of important daily living tasks for myself, such as paying bills or home and car maintenance?
- When is the last time I did something fun by myself or with friends?

Sometimes we have trouble admitting to ourselves that we have limits. If this is the case for you, ask a good friend their thoughts about how you are doing. Remember to choose someone who knows you well and will be honest with you.

If you find that your answers indicate you need to take better care of yourself, or friends and family are concerned, it's time to take action!

Here are some easy steps to take:

- **Ask for help.** Allow yourself to designate some responsibilities to family and/or friends. Most people like being asked to help, so don't be afraid to ask someone to shop for groceries or go to the bank, for instance
- **Keep physically healthy.** See your doctor regularly. Exercise. Eat three meals and two snacks daily. Talk with your doctor or a therapist if you are having trouble sleeping.
- **Get out!** See a movie, go to lunch, take a walk, visit with friends. You can do these things, even if you can't leave the house.
- **See a therapist or join a support group, or both.** Find a way to express how you are feeling. Learn how others take care of themselves. Learn how to meditate, and other ways to relax. Learn how to let go of control. Visit alz.org/WNY to find resources for help.

The goal is to be a good caregiver. Balance your needs with the needs of others. If symptoms of caregiver stress are ignored, the problem will worsen, so take steps to address your stress to be the best you.

Sheryl Schechter, LMSW

chapter strives to make key connections among at-risk populations

Increasing concern and awareness about Alzheimer's and dementia has enabled the Alzheimer's Association to support more research projects. That research points to a growing body of evidence indicating that certain groups may be at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, including African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos.

The recent 2015 Alzheimer's Association Facts and Figures report indicates those populations are particularly vulnerable because of a higher prevalence of hypertension and diabetes.



As part of her goal to find new methods of engaging individuals and families at risk of developing the disease, Community Engagement Director Chanell McCain is hoping to build new paths that will lead us toward making critical connections in high-risk communities. If you are a member of or involved with at-risk populations, please contact Chanell. She would like to hear your thoughts about how the Chapter can better engage with those at the highest risk of dementia. Contact Chanell at cmccain@alz.org or 1.800.272.3900.