

## Warning! Caregiving can be hazardous to YOUR health!

Caregivers are subject to a great deal of physical and emotional stress that can actually threaten their own health. It is vital that caregivers take care of their own physical and mental health needs. If they don't, they may be far less able to help someone else. If you are a caregiver take this stress test and learn the warning signs of caregiver stress.

### The Caregiver Stress Test

Think about how you have been feeling over the past 2 weeks.

Are you:

1. 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."

2. Anxious...about facing another day and what the future holds.

"I'm worried about what will happen when I can no longer provide care."

3. Depressed...you feel sad and hopeless much of the time.

"I don't care anymore. What is wrong with me?"

4. Exhausted...you barely have the energy to complete your daily tasks.

"I don't have the energy to do anything anymore."

5. Sleep deprived...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."

6. Unusually emotional...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."

7. Having difficulty concentrating...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."

8. Having more 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."

If you answered YES to ANY of these YOU need to call The Center for Family Caregivers 951-7118.

### Caregiver Stress Warning Signs

Caregiving can be one of the most stressful situations faced in a lifetime. Common signs that stress may be affecting your health include:

### **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Disturbed sleep
- Back, shoulder or neck pain, muscle tension
- Headaches
- Stomach/digestive problems (upset or acid stomach, cramps, heartburn, gas, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea)
- Loss of hair
- High blood pressure, irregular heart beat palpitations
- Weight fluctuation (gain or loss)
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Perspiration
- Skin disorders (hives, eczema, psoriasis, tics, itching)
- Periodontal disease, jaw pain
- Reproductive problems/ infertility
- Weak immune system suppression: more colds, flu, infections
- Sexual dysfunction/ lack of libido

### **EMOTIONAL SIGNS**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Moodiness/ mood swings
- Butterflies
- Feeling out of control
- Irritability, easily frustrated, road rage
- Memory problems and lack of concentration
- Increased substance abuse
- Phobias
- Argumentative
- Feeling of isolation
- Job dissatisfaction