

AgingCare

FROM DEL: Please never be ashamed of seeing a counselor. When I was caring for my parents I saw a male counselor that didn't say much, but had the ability to get me to talk most of the time and helped me set goals. Yes, I know that I can easily start talking, but that's what needs to happen. You need to personalize it by sharing, and be open and accepting to recognize what your need. Please see the questions at the bottom of this link for further help on this topic. They are in bold.

The Importance of Counseling for Caregivers

[AgingCare.com](https://www.agingcare.com)

Although caregiving is a uniquely rewarding experience, it is also a mentally and physically demanding job. Without proper support, it can take a toll on your health and your psyche. **Burnout** is a family caregiver's worst enemy, but utilizing mental health resources can help you achieve emotional stability while providing quality care.

The Dangers of Caregiver Burnout

Many family members go through periods of sadness and frustration while caring for a loved one. These are normal human responses to the challenges of the situation, and these feelings do not in any way indicate failure or inadequacy in the provision of care. However, a damaging emotional cycle begins when **caregiver guilt** and anxiety develop over these feelings. Caregivers pour their hearts and souls into their loved ones' care, and the stress of this commitment can have unintended emotional consequences.

When asked about telltale signs of caregiver burnout, Shawn Hertz of the [Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center](https://www.losangelescaregiverresourcecenter.com) says resentment is a common indicator.

"There are quite a few red flags for burnout, including medical, physical, psychological and social symptoms," Hertz explains. "That's the important thing to remember about caregiver stress: it doesn't just affect one aspect of your life. It affects all the major aspects of life that make you a whole person."

Being proactive about **minimizing caregiver burden** and learning how to handle stress in a healthy way is crucial for succeeding in this role.

Why Caregiver Counseling Is a Necessity

The responsibility of caring for a senior's constant needs can cause caregivers to feel trapped and overwhelmed. Frustration can quickly grow into anger, resentment and depression when left unchecked. The [Family Caregiver Alliance](https://www.familycaregiveralliance.org) estimates that nearly 20 percent of family caregivers suffer from some form of depression. For reference, the [2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](https://www.samhsa.gov/2k19) estimates that 7.8 percent of American adults experienced at least one major depressive episode.

Mental health disorders are even more common among dementia caregivers. One study of mental health issues in those caring for Alzheimer's patients found that the prevalence of depression was 34 percent, anxiety was 43.6 percent and the use of psychotropic drugs was 27.2 percent.

Not all caregivers experience depression, anxiety or feelings of inadequacy, but for those who do, learning how to understand and address those feelings is one of the greatest benefits of counseling. The National Institute on Aging suggests that caregivers find someone they can talk with and truly vent to without judgment. Being able to confide in someone often helps to head off feelings of **isolation** and powerlessness in overwhelmed caregivers. Those who receive regular emotional support are better equipped to prevent burnout, handle difficult care decisions and balance their own needs with those of their loved ones.

Therapy for Caregivers: Options and Opportunities

Caregivers can receive emotional support from professional therapists, in-person and [online support groups](#), and one-on-one discussions with friends and family. Skilled therapists will help you process your feelings, learn to set boundaries, strengthen your problem-solving abilities, and improve communication with your care recipient and other family members. Other forms of counseling may be provided by professional care organizations as well. For example, hospice providers often offer specialized [grief counseling](#) for a patient's surviving family members. If you decide that talking with a professional is the way to go, check with your health insurance company for a list of providers that are covered under your plan. For those who cannot afford counseling, talking with an understanding friend or family member and joining a support group are two free ways of receiving vital encouragement, information and advice. Mental health services are also available on a sliding fee scale through [government-funded community health centers](#). Contact your local [Area Agency on Aging](#) to learn about additional resources in your community that can help you care for your loved one and yourself.

Sources: Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders Among Caregivers of Patients With Alzheimer Disease (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2015.09.007>); Taking Care of Yourself: Tips for Caregivers (<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/taking-care-yourself-tips-caregivers>)

Related Articles

- [Why Some Family Caregivers Refuse Help](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue: When Caregivers Go Beyond Burnout](#)
- [Understanding Mental Health Issues in Seniors](#)

Recent Questions

- [Does anyone have experience with Gabapentin used commonly even in animals off-label as well as humans to help with anxiety in seniors?](#)
- [My mom was diagnosed with dementia due to mini strokes. She is obsessed with giving her money to PCH sweepstakes scammers. What can I do?](#)
- [Opinions on the role of occupational therapy for those with dementia?](#)

Popular Questions

- [Has anyone gone to a therapist due to your caregiving situation? If so did it help or not?](#)
- [Mother's constant misery is destructive. She won't live anywhere. Any advice?](#)
- [Has anyone ever lost interest in things you use to enjoy or were excited about because of caregiving?](#)

Related Questions

- [My father-in-law moved in and I had to quit my job and care for him all day. He is verybally abusive. How can I cope?](#)
- [My mother wants me to sit with her all day, but I have things to do. What can be done?](#)
- [What are some good things to remember when trying to find an assisted living facility?](#)
- [Have you used counseling and has it helped?](#)
- [What do you do for caregiver burnout when your parent refuses all outside help?](#)
- [How can I handle the stress of caring for my wife who has Multiple Sclerosis, I am starting to experience caregiver burnout?](#)