

Coping Checklist for Caregivers

Caring for someone who is sick, taking on new responsibilities, and worrying about the future can be exhausting at the very least – and can quickly lead to burnout. When you are busy caring for the person with cancer, who's taking care of you? Check out these lists to identify strengths and weaknesses you can build on or improve.

Healthy ways to cope. Take a moment to look at the statements below, which describe some healthy situations and ways of coping. They'll give you an idea of how well you are holding up, and maybe some thoughts about where you need to make a few changes to take better care of yourself. The more of these statements you can agree with, the better. If you don't already have or do all of these, look at ways you can start working toward those that appeal to you. They can help you expand and strengthen your coping skills.

- I have a supportive family around me.
- I pursue a hobby or project for work, church, or my community.
- I take part in a social or activity group more than once a month.
- I am within 10 pounds of my ideal body weight for my height and bone structure.
- I use relaxation methods such as meditation, yoga, or progressive muscle relaxation at least 5 times a week.
- During an average week I get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise (such as walking or yoga) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity (such as jogging or basketball).
- I eat a well-balanced, wholesome meal 2 or 3 times during an average day. (A balanced meal is low in fat and high in vegetables, fruits and whole-grain foods.)
- I do something enjoyable “just for me” at least once during an average week.
- I have a place where I can go to relax or be by myself.

- I set priorities and manage my time every day (such as deciding what tasks are most important, how much I can and can't do, and by getting help when needed).

It can be hard to find the time to do all these things, but they can help a lot in keeping some balance in your life during this very stressful time. If your schedule is too crowded, see who you can ask for help. If there's no one to help you, talk to your loved one's cancer care team to find out what resources may be available in your area. You can find more tips and ideas in our pieces called [What it Takes to Be a Caregiver](#) and [What You Need to Know as a Cancer Caregiver](#). Read them online or call us at 1-800-227-2345 for free copies.

Less-healthy coping. If you use any of the strategies below to help you get by, you may find that over the long term they actually lower your ability to deal with important issues in your life. They can also create health problems and worsen your relationships with loved ones. If you need help quitting tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs, please talk with your doctor.

- I smoke cigarettes or use tobacco several times a week.
- At least once or twice during an average week I use medicines, alcohol, or other substances to help me sleep.
- At least once or twice during an average week I use alcohol, medicines, or other substances to reduce anxiety or help me calm down.
- I bring work home at least once or twice during an average week.

If you find it hard to cope or feel overwhelmed or sad all the time, you may want to talk with your doctor about these feelings. If you feel unsure about whether you need help, see our [Caregiver Distress Checklist](#).

Get support. [ACS support programs](#) reach cancer survivors, patients, and caregivers throughout the US. Practical advice is available online to help patients and caregivers manage day-to-day and cope with physical and emotional changes. For more information and support, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. At the [ACS Cancer Survivors Network Web site](#) you can trade information and experiences with other caregivers, patients, and survivors – all from the convenience of your own home.

Source: This checklist was adapted from one created by Dr. George Everly Jr. of the University of Maryland. The original appears in the U.S. Public Health Service pamphlet, "What Do You Know About Stress" (DHHS Publication No. PHS79-50097) and is in the public domain. Please give appropriate credit if you copy it.

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