



How To Determine the Difference

Between Caregiving Stress and More Serious Mental Health Conditions

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Statistics about Caregiver Stress and Mental Health



Caregivers:

- Have up to **2x the risk** for developing physical and mental health symptoms
- Experience **stress, anxiety, anger, grief, and depression** at higher levels compared to the national average.
- Are at **greater risk** for experiencing **faith struggles**.

More Statistics



- **18.5%** of all adults experience mild to severe symptoms of depression.
- **31%** of parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities experience moderate depression.

Just a Few More Statistics

Studies have found:

- **24%** of moms caring for children with autism experience symptoms of depression.
- Mothers caring for children with cerebral palsy have **double the risk** for developing depression.



Trauma and Caregivers



- Traumatic pregnancies or traumatic medical events in a child's life **compound the risk for depression and anxiety** in caregivers.
- **Approximately 20%** of parents of children with severe illnesses and medical treatment met the criteria for **post-traumatic stress disorder** in a 2021 Covid pandemic study.

Expected Responses Among Caregivers

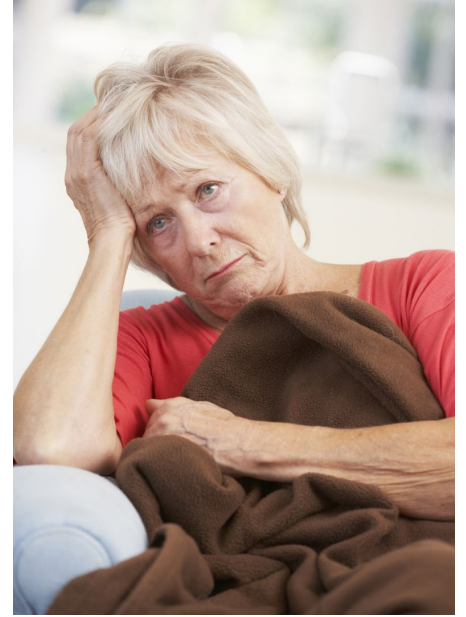


- Waves of painful and mixed emotions.
- Sadness, anxiety, and even a mildly depressed mood caused by chronic stress, loss, and chronic grief.

Seek a Mental Health Assessment

When your mood:

- Begins to negatively impact your daily functioning and quality of life.
- This situation lasts longer than two weeks.



Can You Relate to Any of
These Thoughts?

1. I feel so overwhelmed.
2. I find myself sad and crying a lot.
3. I'm having difficulty sleeping.
4. Nothing is ever going to get better.
5. I feel more irritable.
6. I don't want to be around other people.



7. It's hard to get motivated to get out of bed in the morning.
8. I'm having a hard time concentrating.
9. Alcohol or pills help me cope.
10. I can't handle this much longer.
11. I'm so anxious I have a hard time functioning.
12. I don't feel like eating as much or I'm eating a lot more than usual.



If any of those statements resonate,
ask yourself ...



- Have my symptoms lasted longer than two weeks?
- Are they negatively impacting the quality of my daily life and/or my family?
- Am I or others concerned about my mental wellbeing?
- Do I think about death, wish that I were dead, or think about harming myself?

Seek Help as Soon as Possible



- If you suspect that you are experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, or another mental health condition.
- **The sooner** you seek treatment, **the better** the outcome will be, especially when dealing with trauma.
- If you ever feel like you are in crisis or worried about your safety, call the national suicide prevention lifeline at **800-273-TALK (8255)** or go to your nearest emergency room.

My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Eating healthy
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.



Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies

For help finding treatment, visit www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

If you are in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 74741).



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7 Steps for Finding a Therapist

#1: Ask Around

#2: Use *Psychology Today's* Therapist Locator

#3: Screen the List

#4: Call your Insurance Company

#5: Do a Phone Screening

#6: Visit the Therapist

#7: Assess the Situation



Support Groups



- If you do not already attend a group, strongly consider finding a support group to attend
- Research has shown that participating in a support group can help improve mental health
- Social connection and support have been found as one of the most critical variables in lowering levels of stress, anxiety, and depression
- Attend in person or online (Live groups, social media, Facebook groups)

Ways To Cope with Stress



- Watch or read something funny
- Name something for which you're grateful
- Listen to a guided progressive muscle relaxation exercise
- Talk to someone
- Pray
- Go for a walk
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Eat three balanced meals

Ways To Cope with Stress

- Drink plenty of water
- Spend 20 minutes on a favorite hobby
- Listen to music/sing
- Read a Scripture passage
- Practice mindfulness principles
- Try a new physical activity (Yoga/Pilates/strength training)
- Intentionally smile
- Sit outside or look out a window
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Journal about how you are feeling
- Text, email, or call a friend





Q&A

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