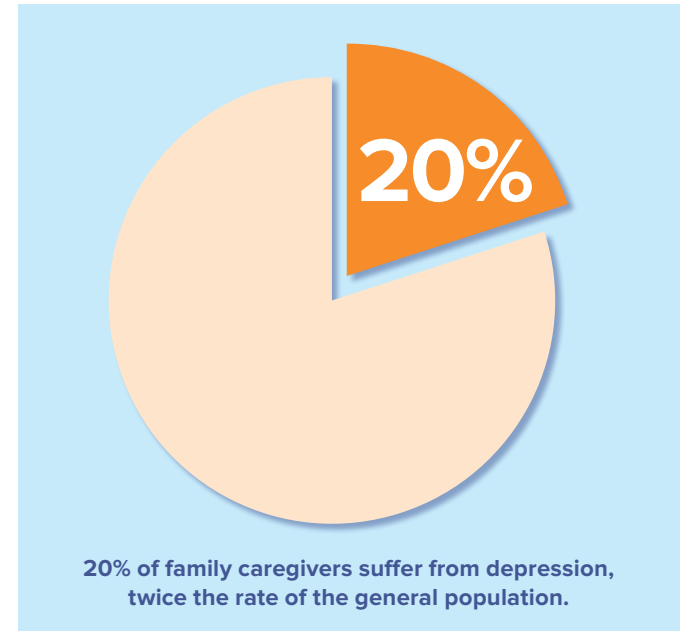


THE QUIET CRISIS:

Caregiver Depression

Caregiver depression is one of today's silent health crises. 20% of family caregivers suffer from depression – twice the rate of the general population. Caregivers are not depressed because they're providing care for their loved ones, but in an effort to give the best care possible, they sacrifice their own physical and emotional needs. As a result, anger, anxiety, sadness, isolation, exhaustion and guilt for having these feelings take their toll on mental, emotional and, ultimately, physical health. While caregivers often face many difficult challenges, there are steps that they can take to protect their emotional well-being.



Assess Where You Are

How are you? Know where you stand mentally and emotionally. Take a moment. Find a quiet place and take the **Caregiver Self-Assessment**. The assessment will allow you to reflect on what you're honestly feeling and what steps to take next. Your next steps may include seeking help from a mental health professional who will help you navigate the difficult journey ahead.

Make Time for Yourself

It's not easy, but you must make time for yourself. Take time away from caregiving to maintain friendships, social contacts and professional networks. Pursue hobbies and activities you enjoy. Be sure to exercise regularly and eat nourishing meals. Get plenty of sleep and rest. Find activities that bring you joy and restore balance to your life.



Talk With Your Manager or Human Resources Department

It may be possible to work out flexible work arrangements to improve work-life balance. This may include options such as working from home two days a week or taking short breaks during the day to spend with your loved one. You may also be able to take some time off completely if required. For more information, consult the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**.

Protect Your Peace

Avoid negative people, activities and situations that cause you stress. Practice mindfulness exercises and learn to deal with difficult emotions like anger, guilt, and frustration. Try to maintain a sense of humor.



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Establish a Support Network

Find someone to talk with about your feelings. It is vital to have a strong support network to cope with difficult challenges. Consult your mental health provider. Become acquainted with support resources in your community and make use of them. Develop a strong support network of friends and family members you can count on for help and support whenever you need it. Look to connect with other caregivers to build and maintain positive relationships and exchange support.

These are just a few suggestions to help you care for yourself while caring for your loved one. Try to follow just one or two. You already have much to consider daily. Get the help you need to stay strong and healthy for yourself and those you care for.