Article Series Caregivers

6 Ways to Ask For and Get The Support You Need as a Caregiver

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All Caregivers

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Caring for a loved one with cancer can be deeply rewarding and meaningful, but it can also take a toll on your well-being.

Cancer caregivers are often juggling multiple responsibilities for their loved ones – from logistical support such as grocery shopping and transportation to being ever-present to help their loved one in and out of chairs and help them get to the

bathroom. These duties often leave caregivers with less time to manage their own lives.

Nearly half of cancer caregivers report experiencing stress and anxiety, and with this may come feelings of physical stress, financial worries, and overwhelming feelings. A survey of 1,200 caregivers working at large companies in the United States reported that approximately two-thirds (67%) of caregivers experience difficulty balancing their careers with caregiving responsibilities – highlighting the indirect impact caregiving can have on employment.

Yet often caregivers are hesitant to seek support. They may feel responsible for caring for their loved ones, and feel guilty asking for help. And if they do ask for assistance, some find it uncomfortable requesting the exact support they need.

But reaching out for support can make a world of difference to your caregiving journey. Consider trying these **Microsteps**.

Saying “yes” to offers of help and then being specific about your needs.

Don’t be afraid to accept any help that’s offered to you. The next time someone says, “Let me know what you need,” respond with a few concrete options, like cooking a meal, picking up a prescription, buying groceries, or taking your loved one to a medical appointment. Often, it’s the case that loved ones want to help caregivers, they just don’t know how.

Scheduling a meeting with your manager to discuss flexible working arrangements.

Explain your caregiving situation and discuss the possibility of a flexible or hybrid arrangement if you work in an office. Even a small adjustment like starting your day earlier or working from home one day a week may help you manage your tasks. Research has shown that flexibility at work often helps caregivers balance both their jobs and caregiving responsibilities and may also help lower stress.

Asking for a complete list of contacts on the care team to help clarify and simplify communication.

Being proactive helps you to get the answers you need, when you need them. Ask for clarity about points of contact, where to direct specific questions about medication and side effects, and how to find support on weekends and holidays if you need it.

Joining an in-person or online support group for caregivers.

Connecting with others who are navigating similar journeys and sharing ideas can be helpful and comforting, and you may make new friends in the process. The Cancer Survivors Network at **https://csn.cancer.org/** is a peer support community for cancer patients, survivors and caregivers**.**

Making an appointment with the medical billing coordinator or a patient financial counselor for practical guidance and resources if you're worried about money.

Tackling financial concerns whether about treatment, or daily living expenses, may help ease stress. You may find support with fundraising or finding extra financial resources to help navigate your caregiving journey. Visit **MyHealthcareFinances.com** to learn more about Health Insurance, Medical Bills, and Employment & Disability.

Setting up an appointment with a therapist or social worker if you feel stressed.

Having support from a skilled therapist or counselor can help you manage your stress, so you don't feel overwhelmed. There are a number of ways to find a therapist. You can ask friends, family or your care team for referrals. You can also reach out to your employer's Employee Assistance Program. If you're a college student, your university may offer counseling services. You can also use online resource such as Psychology Today or the psychologist locator on the website of the American Psychological Association.

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