



Honors Caregivers—Plum

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Caregiver Distress Checklist

Caregiver Self-Assessment Questionnaire

How are YOU?

Caregivers are often so concerned with caring for their relative’s needs that they lose sight of their own well-being. Please take just a moment to answer the following questions. Once you have answered the questions, go to the bottom of the page to do a self-evaluation.

During the past week or so, I have ...

1. Had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing..... Yes No
2. Felt that I couldn’t leave my relative alone..... Yes No
3. Had difficulty making decisions..... Yes No
4. Felt completely overwhelmed..... Yes No
5. Felt useful and needed..... Yes No
6. Felt lonely..... Yes No
7. Been upset that my relative has changed so much from his/her former self..... Yes No
8. Felt a loss of privacy and/or personal time..... Yes No
9. Been edgy or irritable..... Yes No
10. Had sleep disturbed because of caring for my relative..... Yes No
11. Had a crying spell(s)..... Yes No
12. Felt strained between work and family responsibilities..... Yes No
13. Had back pain..... Yes No
14. Felt ill (headaches, stomach problems or common cold)..... Yes No
15. Been satisfied with the support my family has given me..... Yes No
16. Found my relative’s living situation to be inconvenient or a barrier to care..... Yes No
17. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “not stressful” to 10 being “extremely stressful,” please rate your current level of stress. _____
18. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “very healthy” to 10 being “very ill,” please rate your current health compared to what it was this time last year. _____

Comments:

(Please feel free to comment or provide feedback.)



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Self-evaluation

To determine your score

1. Count up all your “Yes” responses EXCEPT do not count # 5 or 15 yet.
2. Now, look at Questions #5 and 15. If you responded “Yes” to these questions, do NOT count these with your “Yes” count. If you responded “No” to either or both questions, add these to your “Yes” count. (For example, if you had 4 “Yes” answers on the rest of the questions, and you answered “No” to question #5 and “No” to question #15, your total score would be 6.)

To interpret your response

Chances are that you are experiencing a high degree of distress:

- If you answered “Yes” to either or both questions 4 and 11; or
- If your total “Yes” score = 10 or more; or
- If your score on question 17 is 6 or higher; or
- If your score on question 18 is 6 or higher

Source: American Medical Association. All Rights Reserved

If you are having a high degree of distress

- Consider seeing a doctor for a check-up for yourself
- Look for some relief from caregiving (Talk to the patient’s doctor, social worker, or cancer care team about resources available in your community.)
- Consider joining a support group for caregivers. Online and phone support is available

Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for more information and referrals

If your distress level is low

It isn’t unusual for caregivers to have some of these problems for a short time. But they may mean that you’re at risk for higher levels of distress. When caregivers don’t attend to their own needs and allow other pressures to take over, they may lose the ability to continue to care for their loved one. Part of caring for someone else is caring for yourself.

You may want to learn more about managing caregivers’ responsibilities. You can learn more about caregiving on our Web site. You can also get ideas about healthy coping from our [Coping Checklist for Caregivers](#).



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Now what?

Asking for help can be a good thing. You may need more than one kind of help to manage caring for your loved one. See a doctor if you have serious distress, or if you can't accomplish your day-to-day activities. We also encourage you to print out this checklist and talk it over with a doctor, nurse, social worker, or other professional on your loved one's cancer care team.

[ACS support programs](#) reach cancer survivors and patients throughout the US. Practical advice is also available online to help caregivers manage day-to-day and cope with physical and emotional changes. At the [ACS Cancer Survivors Network Web site](#) you can trade information and experiences with other caregivers—all without leaving home.

For more information call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.

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.)



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Healthy ways to cope. (continued)

- 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.