



Caring for Caregivers during Covid19

by HSB's Patient Care Services Team

We at Hospice of Santa Barbara know that caregivers are under a heavy burden these days and we are here to help counteract caregiver burnout. During the increased stress of this time of physical distancing, caregivers continue in the emotionally and physically tiring work of taking care of a loved one whose health is declining. They are not getting the respite care they rely on, friends and volunteers can no longer come for a few hours to give them a break. In home support care has been cut or discontinued. Without these important supports, we might be feeling overwhelmed or worried all the time, easily irritated, depressed, having trouble focusing, increased aches and pains, not eating or sleeping well. These are all signs of stress so please allow some time and attention for yourself.

We recognize that this situation is a marathon rather than a sprint and none of us know how long these challenging conditions will last. It is important to find self-care practices that take care of us so that we can stay well. These are the times to do less so that we can last longer. We encourage caregivers to let go of extra duties, to relax some standards on what should be done. To prioritize what is truly necessary and let go of the rest for now.

Friends, this is not a time for "I'm fine", perfectionism or "I can manage it all on my own." Though many of us want to feel that way, right now it's truly not functional. Please ask for help and receive help from family members, neighbors and supportive local organizations. This might include having others shop and drop off food and supplies. Allow support agency staff to help with navigating medical appointments, paperwork, and coordinating care. Ask friends to do phone or video check-ins with you and also with the person you are taking care of. This might allow you short breaks while another is paying full attention to them in this safe way.

Celebrate the small successes, the moments of laughter or connection. Remember what has inspired and sustained you before in difficult times and revisit these books, music, movies, practices. Do something each day that calms and centers you, something each day that connects you with a friend, something each day that makes you laugh. Utilize online support groups, meditation, or yoga classes.

Reach out to a friend, Counselor or Spiritual Care Counselor who will listen to you and allow yourself to spill all you've been holding. Lean into being cared for. Name all the emotions you may be having, it helps to acknowledge them. Even if it feels like whining or complaining, it's

helpful to let it out, to let it go. Cry if that's what you need to do. These are hard times and you are coping with a lot. Imagine your friend giving you a hug. Hug yourself.

Get outside, even if only for a few minutes. Take a few deep breathes. Feel the sun on your face, listen for the sound of the birds. Really look at a flower, notice the colors of the sky or watch a hummingbird. Feel your feet on the ground. Taking several short breaks and moving your body during the day works. Eat nourishing food, it helps to give our bodies healthy fuel. Prioritize getting enough rest.

Know that you are not alone. Explore caregiver support groups online. [Coast Caregiver Resource Center \(https://www.cottagehealth.org/services/rehabilitation/caregiver-services/\)](https://www.cottagehealth.org/services/rehabilitation/caregiver-services/)

FSA Caregiver Support group

[\(https://resources.caregiver.com/listing/caregiver-support-group-5509d3a7e12f6.html\)](https://resources.caregiver.com/listing/caregiver-support-group-5509d3a7e12f6.html)

Please take good care of yourself, you matter. If you feel any symptoms of burnout or are feeling overwhelmed, call Hospice of Santa Barbara 805-563-8820, ask for Rebecca or Michele so we can help you find the support you deserve.