



Compound Caregivers

Within the scope of family caregivers, parents caring for adult children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are unique. Theirs is a lifelong commitment which is often subject to additional caregiving responsibilities for other family members. Elizabeth

Perkins, from the University of South Florida, uses the term, *Compound Caregiver*, to refer to a parent who, while providing considerable care to their son or daughter with a disability, find themselves also responsible for an aging parent or a spouse with a chronic illness or acquired disability. Performing multiple care-giving roles with inadequate help may cause caregivers to feel physically exhausted and emotionally stressed. They may feel resentful to the restrictions placed on their own life and activities. Unlike other care-giving roles that come and go with the family life cycle, parents of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue their care-giving responsibilities until their own incapacity or death. With this comes additional anxiety: *Who will take care of my son or daughter when I no longer can?* If you are a compound caregiver or know one, please consider these suggestions to find and keep joy in the ministry of care-giving.

Tips for Compound Caregivers

- Take charge of your life, and don't let your loved one's illness or disability always take center stage.
- Continue to participate in religious practices and recreational activities that are important to you.
- Consider employment options such as flex time or a leave of absence.
- Acknowledge that care-giving is a physically and psychologically demanding job. Respite is crucial to avoid burn-out and to continue providing good care.
- Whenever possible, arrange for substitute caregivers at the same time for all those under your care to enable you to gain the most from respite.
- Watch out for signs of depression; seek professional help when needed.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help when needed from friends, family and professionals.
- When others offer to help, accept the offer and give them specific things they can do.
- Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
- Seek support from other caregivers, informally one-on-one, or in a support group.
- Take care of your own health with good nutrition, exercise and regular medical check-ups.
- Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.

Resources:

Compound Caregivers: Overlooked and Overburdened

http://fffcic.fmhi.usf.edu/docs/FCIC_CompoundCaregivers_070811.pdf

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