

COPING WITH DEPRESSION

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When caregivers take on the responsibility of caring for a loved one, we expect our lives to change. What is unexpected, and often goes unnoticed, is the forfeiting of our own well-being in order to become a primary caregiver.

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer, Yes, to any of them, you need assistance. Support groups, your loved one's social worker, your physician, counseling or therapeutic centers and a number of other community resources can help you in providing greater balance between your caregiving responsibilities and your well-being.

- Have you stopped communicating with friends you had before you became a caregiver?
- Do you lack time to participate in activities that make you feel good?
- Is your caregiving role negatively affecting your personal relationships?
- Have you failed to have a check-up lately or find you do not follow the doctor's recommendation for your own health?
- Does your loved one need, but not have, a monitoring device?
- Has your loved one become abusive towards you?
- Have you noticed you are becoming verbally, physically or emotionally abusive to your loved one?
- Are you drinking or taking drugs to cope with stress or distress?
- Has your sleeping pattern changed since becoming a caregiver?
- Do you feel you are not getting enough sleep?
- Do you refuse to let others assist you, or give your respite, for fear something will happen if you leave your loved one in another's care?