

Understanding Caregiver Guilt

Empowerment Tool

The journey of caring for someone with dementia can lead to moments of feeling guilty. Guilt is a normal emotion, but steps can be taken to avoid it becoming paralyzing or obsessive.

TIPS FOR COPING WITH CAREGIVER GUILT:

- **Acknowledge the guilt** – It's normal to feel guilt from time to time. Once it's recognized, we are better able to deal with it. Ignoring these feelings can affect both the caregiver's quality of life and their ability to care for others.
- **Look at the bigger picture** – Although you may be stressed with a particular situation now, it will not last forever. Look at the sacrifices you make for your loved one and realize that you are doing a great job.
- **Accept that you're human and have flaws** – All of us make mistakes from time to time. Recognize your strengths and don't focus on the negative.
- **Make time for yourself** – This is easier said than done, but it's a must! Taking time out helps you put your situation in better perspective.
- **Know that you are making the best decision for you and your loved one at this time** – This can be hard to accept, especially if you've made a promise to a loved one in the past that you can no longer keep. When circumstances change, different decisions may need to be made.
- **Develop a healthy caregiving life philosophy.**
 - Love without losing yourself
 - Don't sweat the small stuff
 - Focus on the good that you are doing
 - Be compassionate with yourself
 - Accept that you cannot and should not be on this journey alone

Seek professional help if thoughts and feelings are overwhelming. If you find yourself living with chronic guilt feelings that interfere with your life, please seek professional help.