

CONVERSATIONS FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregiver Burnout: Tools, Resources, and Support

May 27, 2026
12pm - 1pm EST

SESSION NOTES

Below is a summary of the topics and items discussed on the May 27, 2026 session of **Conversations for Caregivers: Caregiver Burnout - Tools, Resources, and Support**.

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SESSION TOPICS

Caregiver Defined | Burnout Causes | Signs & Symptoms | Health Risks | Workplace Impact
Financial Impact | Self-Care Basics | Support Systems | Asking for Help | Respite Care
Workplace Benefits | Government Support | VA Programs

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CAREGIVER DEFINED

- Family caregivers are unpaid individuals—family, friends, or neighbors—providing short- or long-term care for someone with limitations due to illness, injury, or disability
- A primary caregiver is the main person responsible for day-to-day care, while secondary caregivers may live outside the home or provide support on weekends or from a distance
- Family caregivers in the U.S. contribute more than a trillion dollars worth of labor each year; without them, the health system would not be able to sustain the level of care currently needed

BURNOUT CAUSES

- Being on call constantly with no breaks, especially as a sole primary caregiver without secondary support, creates overwhelming demand
- Caregivers frequently neglect their own physical and mental health—skipping appointments, losing sleep, and forgoing regular checkups to prioritize their loved one's needs
- Social isolation increases as caregivers cut back on activities, miss connections, and lose outlets for recharging, often leading to agitation, frustration, and resentment
- A lack of privacy and personal time compounds stress, with caregivers reporting they rarely have a moment to themselves

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Sixty percent of caregivers report burnout symptoms, and 40% report chronic high stress levels—both significant indicators that support and intervention are needed
- Sleep deprivation is common, particularly when caring for someone with dementia who may wander or need overnight monitoring
- Feelings of hopelessness, overwhelm, resentment, and reduced compassion can create a cycle of anger, frustration, guilt, and emotional exhaustion

RED FLAGS

- Thoughts of harming yourself or others require immediate action—call 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or 911; recent murder-suicides involving caregivers underscore how critical early intervention is

- Signs of abuse or neglect toward a care recipient should be reported to Adult Protective Services (or CPS for children); overwhelmed caregivers can make harmful decisions under extreme stress
- Substance abuse may emerge as a coping mechanism, particularly for caregivers with prior history; impaired caregiving can lead to dangerous medication errors and emergency situations



HEALTH RISKS

- Caregivers face higher rates of depression, anxiety, and mortality risk due to chronic emotional strain and neglected personal health
- Weakened immune systems from poor sleep, nutrition, and self-care make caregivers more susceptible to illness—which in turn affects the person receiving care
- Physical injuries from lifting and mobility assistance are common, making personal fitness an important part of long-term caregiving readiness

ASSISTED LIVING

- For those who need help with ADLs but do not require 24-hour medical supervision
- Typically private apartments with shared dining and activity spaces; staff are on-site 24 hours for safety, not clinical care
- Residents can use a pendant or call for assistance — a meaningful safety upgrade from being alone at home
- Tiered pricing based on level of care: lower tiers for residents who come in early (e.g., medication management only); higher tiers for those needing full ADL assistance
- The most common entry level is mid-tier — medication management plus bathing and dressing assistance
- Cost: national median around \$5,900/month; can reach \$10,000–\$11,000 for the highest care tier; base rate is typically all-inclusive (rent, utilities, cable, meals, housekeeping, laundry, transportation)

SELF-CARE BASICS

- Self-care is essential, not optional—it means intentionally caring for your own physical, mental, and emotional well-being so you can continue to provide quality care
- Prioritize sleep above all else; when sleep-deprived, decision-making, health, and emotional resilience all suffer significantly
- Keep up with your own medical appointments, eat well, stay active (even with at-home exercise), and practice mindfulness through breathing and being present in the moment
- Give yourself grace: caregiving is hard, your feelings are valid, and you do not have to be perfect—you are doing the best you can

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Caregiver support groups—especially virtual ones—help normalize shared experiences, reduce isolation, and provide practical advice from others at different stages of caregiving
- Professional counseling through a therapist or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers confidential, nonjudgmental support; most EAPs provide approximately five free sessions
- Community and faith-based organizations increasingly offer caregiver support groups and respite services as additional connection points

RESPIRE CARE

- Respite care provides short-term, temporary relief—through in-home help, adult day centers, or short-term facility stays—giving caregivers time to rest, attend appointments, or recharge
- Benefits include improved caregiver-recipient relationships, better emotional well-being, uninterrupted sleep, and meaningful reduction in burnout
- Federal and state programs may offer financial assistance or vouchers for respite care; Virginia, for example, provides a voucher program for family caregivers

KEY RESOURCES

- Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) can help navigate local services for caregivers of older adults; Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services covers adult children
- VA Caregiver Support Programs (1-855-260-3274) offer skills training, online/mobile support, one-on-one coaching, referrals, and assistive equipment for veterans' caregivers
- Hilarity for Charity provides grants and creative support for caregivers, including respite scholarships; Five Wishes is a planning tool for advance directive conversations

Q&A HIGHLIGHTS

Q1: Are we considered caregivers if we're looking after our minor kids, teenagers, and spouse?

A: For this seminar and most caregiver support programs, caregiving refers to caring for someone with a sustained disability, injury, or illness—not typical parenting. If a child or spouse has a qualifying condition requiring ongoing care beyond standard parenting, that qualifies.

Q2: How can I deal with guilt about having my own life outside of my sick family member if I'm one of their only social outlets?

A: Recharging is what allows you to keep providing care. Schedule social time, arrange coverage while you're out, and ask yourself whether your loved one would want you to enjoy those moments. If guilt persists, counseling can help surface and work through deeper issues.

Q3: How do you deal with being a caregiver to someone who is extremely mean and shows no appreciation?

A: Respite care is essential. Learn about your loved one's diagnosis—agitation and verbal aggression are common with conditions like dementia. Know your triggers, set boundaries, and lean on counseling to help process the grief of watching someone you love change.

Q4: What do you do if a person will not let anyone else help them but you?

A: If your loved one can reason, explain the toll caregiving takes and ask them to identify someone they'd accept help from. If they're not at that cognitive level, gradually introduce another caregiver by starting together. Sole caregiving isn't sustainable—without support, you may eventually be unable to provide care at all.

Q5: How do we deal with our care recipient's guilt over needing care?

A: Affirm your loved one through words, body language, and presence. Name the value of your time together: "I'm glad to be here for you." Care recipients often fear being a burden, so consistent, genuine reassurance can help ease that guilt.



ABOUT OUR SPEAKER:

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Director of Care Coordination at Peninsula Agency on Aging in Newport News, Virginia. Toni holds a background in counseling, mental health, and economics, and is passionate about supporting caregivers through education, advocacy, and direct services including virtual caregiver support groups and one-on-one counseling. She is also a personal caregiver for her father, who is diagnosed with Parkinson's.

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