

# CAREGIVER STRESS

FACT SHEET | AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA | SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCLÉROSE LATÉRALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

## TEN SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

### ARE YOU PROVIDING CARE FOR SOMEONE WITH ALS?

Taking care of someone with ALS is a demanding task. It requires time and energy. Looking after someone you love can be difficult. Even with youth and good health on your side, caregiving can be hard. To continue giving care, it is essential that you look after yourself.

Knowing and recognizing the signs of stress in yourself or someone you care about is the first step in taking action. Finding ways to reduce the stress will help to lessen the long-term emotional and physical toll of caregiving. As a caregiver, you should take care of yourself as you are the most important person in the life of someone with ALS. There are things that can be done to help you maintain your health and well being.

The following is a list of common signs of caregiver stress to review. If you are experiencing a number of the symptoms on a regular basis, call your doctor or contact your local ALS Society for help.

**DENIAL** ... about ALS and its effect on the person living with ALS: "I know Mom will get better. They must have made a mistake."

**ANGER** ... at the person with ALS and others: "I'm having to do EVERYTHING!!"

**WITHDRAWING SOCIALLY** ... you no longer want to stay in touch with friends or participate in activities you once enjoyed: "I don't want the neighbours to see us like this."

**ANXIETY** ... about facing another day and what the future holds: "I'm worried about what will happen if I can no longer provide care."

**DEPRESSION** ... you feel sad and hopeless much of the time: "I don't care anymore."

**EXHAUSTION** ... you barely have the energy to complete your daily tasks: "I don't have the energy to do anything anymore."

**SLEEPLESSNESS** ... you wake up in the middle of the night or have nightmares and stressful dreams: "I rarely sleep through the night, listening to hear if Dad is OK."

**EMOTIONAL REACTIONS** ... you cry at minor upsets; you are often irritable: "I cried when the grocery store was out of my favourite cereal. Then I yelled at the clerk."

**LACK OF CONCENTRATION** ... you have trouble focusing and you find it difficult to complete complex tasks: "I used to do the daily crossword, now I am lucky if I can concentrate enough to solve one quarter of it."

**HEALTH PROBLEMS** ... you may lose or gain weight, get sick more often (colds, flu), you may develop chronic health problems (backaches, headaches, high blood pressure): "Since the spring, I have had either a cold or the flu. I just can't seem to shake them." To help cope with the stress you are experiencing, contact your local ALS Society to receive a copy of:

**REDUCING CAREGIVER STRESS: FINDING WAYS TO FEEL BETTER.**

THE ALS SOCIETY HAS INFORMATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

FIND THE SOCIETY NEAREST YOU AND GIVE THEM A CALL. WE ARE HERE TO HELP. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

This Fact Sheet is adapted with permission from the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

