

# Being a Caregiver

**C**oping with illness can be a difficult undertaking, especially with something as serious as breast cancer. When someone close to you is suddenly diagnosed with breast cancer, you may be left wondering how to help.

Whether you're giving emotional support, assisting with doctor appointments or doing everyday chores that your loved one is unable to complete, you are a caregiver.

Accepting the new role of caregiver may be tough. You may experience a total lifestyle change and try to put your loved one before your own needs. Ignoring your own needs can cause you to become less effective as a caregiver.

## **A CAREGIVER'S ROLE**

The role of a caregiver varies by situation. The National Cancer Institute defines a caregiver as "the person who most often helps the person with cancer and is not paid to do so."

Caregivers typically serve as aides or companions and assist with cooking, transportation and everyday chores. A good caregiver is crucial to the emotional and physical support system for a cancer patient.

## **CARING FOR YOURSELF**

It may seem that your wants and needs are second-tier to those of your affected loved one. The experts at The National Cancer Institute point out that fulfilling your own needs will make you a more effective caretaker.



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It may be hard to talk to your loved one about how you're feeling when you know that they are dealing with so much already. But having an outlet to

express yourself and your feelings can help you maximize your ability as a caregiver.

Support groups can offer a great amount of therapy as you

can discuss your feelings with people in similar situations. Talking with others can be a way of forcing yourself to relax. This can be difficult with the

amount of stress and feelings you may be experiencing, but even a weekly group setting can help you put things in perspective.