



## **Effects on the Caregiver**

Taking on the role of caregiver is a huge responsibility and in many cases requires significant adjustments in a person’s lifestyle; which may be especially applicable when a service member becomes unexpectedly wounded, ill, or injured. With any lifestyle change, there are pros and cons, and with that may come positive and negative effects on your body and mind.

Recognizing the common effects other caregivers face can help towards addressing any issues as they come up and achieving gratification in your role as a caregiver.

### **Negative Aspects**

Research and clinical observation has shown an established correlation between physical and psychological health and being a caregiver. Unfortunately, caregiving exhibits many features of chronic stress, as it:

- Creates physical and psychological strain over extended periods of time
- Can be associated with unpredictable and uncontrollable moments
- May create secondary stress, such as in social relationships and work
- Requires frequent timeframes dedicated to high levels of effort and focus <sup>1</sup>

As a result, it may be common for caregivers to experience the following physical and psychological effects over time:

<b>Physical <sup>1,2</sup></b>	<b>Psychological <sup>1,2</sup></b>
• Chronic pain	• Depression
• Weakened immune system	• Emotional problems
• Increased blood pressure	• Cognitive problems
• Higher stress hormone levels	• Anxiety
• Weight fluctuations	• Decreased self-reported well-being

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, consult your health care provider. Your symptoms may be related to increased stresses due to your caregiving situation and there may be lifestyle strategies that can be implemented to mitigate or improve the negative physical or psychological effects. It is also important to maintain regular checkups to ensure you are maintaining your health.



## Positive Aspects

While the negative effects on caregivers may seem challenging and overwhelming, there are also many caregivers that have an overall positive outlook on caregiving and have reported enhancements in their life.<sup>3</sup>

Feeling	Reasoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peace of mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing your loved one is receiving the best care possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accomplishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquiring management and organizational skills that make your everyday life more efficient</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a purpose while helping to enhance your loved one’s quality of life</li> </ul>

Studies have shown that caregivers who approach caregiving with a positive outlook show better emotional outcomes over time. As a result, individuals that identified more positive aspects of caregiving reported less depression, feelings of burden, and better subjective health than those who focused on the negative aspects over an extended period of time.<sup>4</sup>

## Determining your Situation

Every caregiving situation is different and there are many variables that can have a direct effect on your perception of caregiving. Factors such as a care recipient with cognitive and behavioral problems, duration and extent of care, and a spousal caregiver-to-care recipient relationship can all contribute to increased levels of stress.<sup>1</sup> It is important to determine your particular situation and seek help where necessary.

## References

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