

## *Caring for the Caregiver*

**Caregivers face a number of challenges when caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease. Those challenges can lead to stress and physical issues for caregivers.**

If you are a caregiver, there are some very important reasons to develop a daily self-care plan. It is very easy to lose sight of your own physical and emotional needs when you are caring for someone with Alzheimer's. Ignoring your own needs and health can lead to emotional burnout and even serious physical problems. Don't let this happen to you. Here are a few important steps to good self care to keep your own physical and emotional batteries charged.

- ♦ **First of all, accept that taking care of yourself is an essential part of taking care of your loved one.** Good self care is essential and you do not need to feel guilty about taking the time for your own needs.
- ♦ It is important that you **take time for your own medical appointments.** Do not put your physical and emotional needs on the shelf. If you need to see your doctor about physical or emotional symptoms, make sure to do so as soon as possible to avoid problems becoming bigger.
- ♦ **Take time every day for some exercise,** including stretching your muscles to relieve tension. Exercise is the best medicine for stress relief, and helps avoid muscle aches and other stress symptoms.
- ♦ **Do not be embarrassed about asking for guidance on how to cope with the demands of caregiving** and difficult behaviors that your loved one displays. This is not a job that only one person can do, so do not expect to have all of the answers. Allow people with experience and knowledge to support you with new ideas on how to care for your loved one.
- ♦ **Ask for help.** Asking family, friends, etc. to stay with your loved one while you do errands, see a movie, or have lunch with a friend can go a long way to recharging your batteries. It will make others feel good to know they are helping and can be essential to your mental health. If no one is available, consider hiring help for a few hours a week, to ensure you have a break.
- ♦ **Educate yourself** about the resources available in the community, such as support groups, caregiver trainings, adult day care, overnight respite, financial aid, in-home care, and other resources that can greatly help you on your journey as a caregiver. Call Alzheimer's New Jersey to find out what is available in your area.