

## I've been my husband's sole caregiver since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's five years ago. I need a break. Help! - A family caregiver

We hear daily from family caregivers who are exhausted and overwhelmed. Caregiving is hard work, and if you're running on fumes, you won't have anything left for your loved one – much less for yourself.



### The importance of respite (a short period of rest or relief)

Family caregivers are at high risk for serious health problems like high blood pressure, depression and even death. It may feel selfish or too challenging to make time for yourself, especially if he only wants help from you. But if you're feeling worn out, it can impact the quality of care you provide. A little break can do you good. Learn more in our [Caregiver Health](#) guide.

#### What kind of break would work for you?

If you feel isolated or burned out, do you need short breaks during the day? Do you need a week off to recharge? Even if it seems far-fetched, write down your ideal arrangement and commit to taking steps to make it happen. Ultimately, you'll be better off than if you don't ask for help—and you may be surprised at the help that shows up.

#### What kind of care does your husband need?

What level of assistance will allow you to step away? Would a family member, friend or neighbor be comfortable spending a few hours with him? Or, does he have behavioral or medical needs better met by a skilled caregiver? A home care agency, adult care center or overnight respite at an assisted living facility may be the answer. If the cost is unaffordable, ask about payment options.

#### If he only wants help from you, try a creative approach

If you need to hire a care provider, introduce them as a friend from your faith community or another trusted person. If he bristles at adult day care but likes feeling useful, staff can work with you to bring him in as a “volunteer.” Engage his interests; for example, visitors might come for weekly game nights. With a little trial and error, we've seen some imaginative win-win solutions.



### Reach out for help

A lot of family caregivers tell us family and friends are too busy to help. Rather than asking for help in general terms, which may seem daunting to others, ask for help with specific tasks and for specific periods of time. Also, reach into your husband's social circle. Is he a member of a civic or social group? Is he a veteran? Sometimes these peers will be a better match for his interests.

#### Find help in your community

Publicly funded respite programs and financial assistance are available but vary greatly by area. To find out what's available, visit our [Services by State](#) page and choose your husband's home state. You can also find national resources in [Caregiving at Home, a Guide to Community Resources](#). Finally, ask local assisted living residences for pricing on temporary respite options.



### Plan your self-care time

Sometimes caregivers plan time off, only to end up doing more chores. When you carve out precious time for yourself, plan self-care activities ahead of time such as gardening, sleeping or taking a walk with a friend. Learn more in [Taking Care of You](#).