

More information is available through our website:

www.quakeragingresources.org

Additional resources:

James E. Miller, [When You're the Caregiver, 12 Things to Do if Someone You Love is Ill or Incapacitated](#), 1995, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

James E. Miller, [How Can I Help, 12 Things to Do When Someone You Know Suffers a Loss](#), 1995, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Kathy J. Phillips, [The Moon in the Water, Reflections on an Aging Parent](#), 2008, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

Nancy L. Mace, M.A. and Peter Rabins, M.D., M.P.H., [The 36 Hour Day](#), 2001, Wellness Central, New York, NY.

<http://www.aarp.org/family/caregiving/>

<http://www.caregivers.com/>

Care of the Caregiver



www.quakeragingresources.org

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Q: *How does our meeting support caregivers who are facing the chronic needs and concerns of family and friends?*

“...the Latin root of the word “comfort” means ‘with strength’ rather than ‘at ease.’”

S. Jocelyn Burnell, 1989, PYM Faith and Practice 2002

S. Jocelyn Burnell made this observation about pain, but it applies as well in considering the challenges of caregiving. Caring for another, whether because of physical illness, emotional, behavioral or cognitive challenges, is not easy, but it can be an opportunity for personal growth and self-discovery. One may discover one’s own gifts of compassion, patience, love and perseverance. However, even for the most joyful caregiver, there can be times of frustration and stress. Spiritual communities can be a vital resource for people facing the challenge of caring for a loved one. It helps to know signs of caregiver stress:

- Feeling frustrated, irritable, angry, or sad, especially unrelenting
- Changes in sleep pattern—having trouble falling asleep or not wanting to get out of bed
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Loss of interest in activities, withdrawal from friends and/or family
- Getting sick more often than usual
- Exhaustion
- Making unreasonable demands on yourself—feeling you are the only one who can take care of the person
- Feeling you want to hurt yourself or the person for whom you are caring

These symptoms of caregiver stress are very similar to those of Depression. A person who is overwhelmed taking care of others may not recognize that he or she needs help. Others may need to be attentive and take action to support the caregiver.

How can I help? Spiritual Support for Caregivers

It is natural for the person in need of care to become the focus of a Meeting’s concern. However, families and loved ones acting as caregivers may need spiritual and practical support just as much as the person who is ill. Here are some ways your Meeting can help caregivers:

- Take a proactive approach. Often people will be hesitant to ask for help but will accept support if asked. Be prepared to offer specific suggestions for how the Meeting can assist.
- Offer individual support and a listening ear.
- Provide Clearness Committees to assist families in making decisions about care, housing and other concerns. Remember that caregivers may be too busy or overwhelmed to think of this: make a point to remind people of the opportunity.
- Help the caregiver with chores, meals, childcare, transportation, or any number of practical needs. This can give the caregiver a break, or provide peaceful time for them to be with their loved one without the burden of worrying about work undone.
- Keep information on hand about local resources such as your county Agency on Aging, or go to www.quakeragingresources.org