

# Effects on the Caregiver: Spouse & Family

As a caregiver, you may find yourself caught between the needs of your aging parents and the needs of your spouse, children and career. The effects of this dilemma can be felt deeply by you, your spouse and your family. The time that you spend caring for your aging parents can cut into the time that you spend with your family, and it is important that you anticipate this and work to make the situation easier for everyone involved.

## Common Reactions

Here are some of the common reactions that your spouse and family may have:

**JEALOUSY:** Why are your parents taking all of your time and attention?

**CONCERN:** Are you OK? Are your parents OK? What can we do to help?

**FEAR:** How long is this going to last?

**ANGER AND RESENTMENT:** When are we going to be first in your life again?

## The Importance of Communication

Your spouse and family may have these reactions without even realizing it. They may suppress their emotions to protect you, or because they feel guilty about them. Your spouse may simply avoid confronting you; your children may act out their

emotions without understanding what they are feeling.

For these reasons, it is important to give your family the time and space to communicate their feelings with you—and for you to communicate your feelings with them. Set aside regular times—during meals, for instance—when family members can express what they are feeling.

## Involve Your Family

You might also consider involving your spouse and children in the care of your parents. Help your kids make Valentine cards to bring to grandma and grandpa. Talk with your husband or wife about the specifics of mom's recent surgery. Involving your family can make them feel important and needed, and it can also help them to understand what you are going through.

## Your Family Is Your First Priority

No matter how much you love your parents, you may feel that your spouse and children come first. There is nothing wrong with this; it is completely natural and understandable. You must let yourself care for your family first, before you turn your attention to your parents. Showing your spouse and your children that you care will make your home life happier and healthier, and in the long run it will make you a better caregiver for your parents.



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