

RESPITE CARE FOR EVERYONE

Respite Care - Defined

Respite care, which provides caregivers with the opportunity for a temporary rest from their caregiving duties, is designed to do just that. Respite care for loved ones provides short-term breaks for caregivers that can relieve their stress, renew their energy, and restore a sense of balance to their lives.

“You can really change the world if you CARE enough.” – Marian Wright Edelman

A recent study reported that 60% of the family caregivers surveyed, ages 19-64, reported “fair or poor” health and one or more had chronic conditions or disabilities, compared with only 33% of non-caregivers. This report is no surprise to family members who are the primary caregivers of loved ones who need help with everyday living. In fact, the physical, emotional, and economic burdens on caregivers today, can frequently become overwhelming without some form of personal support.

All too often, the health and well-being of at-home caregivers is placed in serious jeopardy because of the stressful circumstances they face every day. Some experts even refer to caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients as the “the second victims” – so caring for any loved one at home can be an overwhelming task. For family members, the physical, emotional, and financial responsibilities that come with being a caregiver take their toll and even the strongest of individuals needs help now and then... even if just for a few hours.

Enter **Respite Care**.

Respite care offers invaluable relief to America’s nearly 50 million caregivers by providing a well-deserved and much needed break from their daily duties and responsibilities. Just a couple hours of relief from the constant care of a loved one, will make a world of difference for that caregiver. It can alleviate stress, boost a person’s energy, and recharge their batteries. Respite care also benefits those being cared for by offering them an alternative to their routine and making each day less monotonous... which we all can appreciate; especially in this new “Covid World” we live in.

Respite care, if done correctly, is a win-win for everyone involved. It can position and provide caregivers with benefits like:

- **Relaxation** – Taking a walk, shopping leisurely through the mall, visiting a museum, or doing whatever brings you joy can calm you. It can also decrease your heart rate, lower your blood pressure and improve your mood. Some studies say that stress accounts for over 80% of all illnesses... so taking time to relax not only is beneficial for those you care for, but also for you, health-wise!
- **Social Engagement** – Finding times to hang out with family and friends is not only key, but “renewing”. If Covid has taught us anything, it’s the fact that ISOLATION is harmful on so many levels and being able to interact with others is a life saver.
- **Energy** – To be effective in your busy life, you must take time to re-energize (cars do not run on empty - even electric ones). Taking this time to recharge is critical to prevent being drained and/or emotionally distant.

- **Space** – Removing yourself from the caregiving situation for even just a few hours can help you relax and bring a renewed sense of purpose. WE all need space and even in the best of relationships, space is critical to keep the love alive.
- **Peace of Mind** – When caring for others, you are always on “high-alert” which can keep you on edge. Respite care allows you to shut down for a while and find balance again.
- **Pleasure** – As a caregiver, you must remember that you have the right to enjoy life. You have no reason to feel guilty in taking time for the things in life that bring you pleasure and happiness.
- **Identity** – You must be purposeful in maintain your sense of self as you are very important too! It can be hard to feel “normal” and respite care gives you the space and time needed to pursue your hobbies and interests - while still loving on those you care for.
- **Perspective** – Time away from caregiving allows you to see more clearly and keep things in proper perspective. This might allow better ideas to present themselves when caring for your loved ones.
- **Engagement** – As discussed above, social isolation can be a huge problem for caregivers. It is important to take time to engage with your friends and family and allow others to be proud of your position as a caregiver and role model and honor the example you are setting for others.
- **Vacation** – Knowing your loved one is safe while you are away can make vacations more satisfying and fulfilling. I have 6 daughters and if I know one thing for sure is that when we know all the daughters are safe and secure – our vacations are the very best!!

And additional benefits for those the caregiver provides for?

- New interaction and change of scenery
- Social development making new friends
- Possible participation in educational and/or social activities
- Diversity, adaptability, and a better life balance
- Finding equanimity

And if all that is not enough, studies show caring for others can be “*contagious*”. Your kindness creates a ripple effect or chain-reaction. One study found that people are more likely to help others after observing another do the same. A respite care provider is an amazing influencer and will inspire so many more to make a difference in their communities and world around them. In essence, what you do has eternal, long-lasting value.

Respite care can be provided in the comfort of one’s home, at a senior daycare, a residential program, or as a church activity.

Home respite care allows one the comfort of familiar surroundings, which is a significant benefit when dealing with cases like Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia. This can encompass assistance with personal hygiene, feeding, playing games/cards, reading aloud or simply providing that much needed companionship.

Senior daycare facilities for those who still maintain a moderate level of functionality are incredibly beneficial. Usually during normal work hours, they may include scheduled activities like arts and crafts, motion exercises and musical entertainment. These facilities and activities are also a great means for them to communicate and maintain social skills.

Residential programs are usually a short-term overnight scenario offered through nursing or group homes.

Key Ministry (<https://www.keyministry.org/find-respice-care>) is one of several church organizations that offer quality respite care through churches or church-affiliated facilities throughout the United States. There are also respite programs throughout the country for those families with children. They can offer temporary relief to assist with family stability, allowing parent(s) the ability to utilize the benefits previously listed.

If you are in need of locating the closest respite care facility, you can search on the Internet and look for ones with specific needs or in a specific geographic area. You can also find an incredible amount of information and resources at <https://archrespice.org/respitelocator>.

Bottom-line, caregiving presents many challenges. However, with the right attitude and respite care, the benefits for the caregivers can be immense. Caregiving presents a special opportunity to not just bless those you care for, but also to bless your home, your neighbors, and your community – you are a “beacon of light through service”. It is best to envision respite care with the words you hear at the beginning of your journey via plane:

“When the masks drop down, take care of yourself first before attempting assist others.”

The important thing to remember is just how important it is and if the caregivers do not take care of themselves, how will they be able to take care of someone else?