

## Part 1: Emotional Support

Shock, helplessness and worry are common emotions for stroke survivors and their loved ones. Immediately after a stroke, it's not unusual to feel overwhelmed, fearful and uncertain about your new role as a caregiver. These emotions may be a result of your loved one's severely limited physical functioning and personality changes. You may also fear that he/she will have another stroke and that it's your duty to help prevent it. Your relationship with your loved one has also been altered. In addition to your previous responsibilities, you may have to take on more household chores and other tasks that your loved one handled.

To help you adjust to your new responsibilities, this section will help you find the emotional care and support you need from your community, family and friends.

### Get Informational Support

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By increasing your knowledge about what a stroke is and what to expect, you can feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

- **Ask questions.** What type of stroke did your loved one have? What side of the brain was affected? What caused the stroke? How can another stroke be prevented?
- **Learn about stroke.** To start, visit **StrokeAssociation.org**. Download and look through our free *Life After Stroke Information Sheets* at <http://bit.ly/190fpb3> to learn more about specific questions you have right now. It is important to learn the signs and symptoms of a stroke in case another one occurs. To learn the signs of stroke, go to **StrokeAssociation.org/warningsigns**.
- **Learn about the effects of stroke.** Go to Part 3 to find out more about stroke and what to ask the healthcare team.



*“Take time to take care of yourself.  
If you don't, you will not be of  
service to the survivor.”*

Janet Scott,  
Caregiver for over 15 years

- **Seek additional information on caring for a stroke survivor.** Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) to request the *Resources for Stroke Family Caregivers Packet*.
- **Talk with someone who understands.** If you are seeking additional support or just need to talk to someone about your questions or concerns, call the Stroke Family Warmline at 1-888-4-STROKE. The Warmline is staffed by specially trained representatives who have had personal experiences with stroke.
- **Define exactly what you need.** Don't hesitate to ask for help with grocery shopping, meals, doctor's visits, yard work, etc.
  - Write down the things that are most difficult for you to get accomplished and look for the right person for the job. Then ask that person to help you with a specific task.
- **Consider seeking professional healthcare services.** If you are unable to care for him/her or would like help, visit AARP's *Care Provider Locator* at <http://bit.ly/1gsefoO>. If you're considering long term care, use AARP's *Long-Term Care Calculator* to estimate costs at <http://bit.ly/1kcwyDD>.

## Find Support From Others

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- **Reach out to family and friends.** Talk to your family and friends about what you are experiencing. Visits, phone calls, e-mails or some shared time at a movie or restaurant can go a long way to help you feel supported, rejuvenated and refreshed.
- **Build a network with other stroke survivors and caregivers.**
  - *Stroke Connection* magazine provides information and inspiration to stroke survivors and caregivers. The print and online magazine includes conditions that may lead to stroke, such as high blood pressure, as well as the physical, communicative and behavioral conditions stroke may cause. It also offers tips for daily living and helpful information for family caregivers. Start your subscription at [StrokeAssociation.org/strokeconnection](http://StrokeAssociation.org/strokeconnection).
  - Join or start a local Stroke Support Group. The warmth, acceptance and emotional support that a stroke support group can offer can improve the recovery process. Many stroke survivors and caregivers attribute their strength during this time to their support networks. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/19PA6Hy>.
- **Consider seeking professional help.** Mental health professionals and pastoral counselors can listen to your questions and concerns while teaching you coping skills to help you understand and better address your emotions.

## Get Logistical/Active Support

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Providing care for a stroke survivor can be rewarding. But it can be stressful and frustrating when you're suddenly thrust into the role of caregiver. Even under the best circumstances, caregiving is a tough job. In fact, it is among life's most challenging roles. There's often little rest and little time to prepare.

If you've just become a caregiver, keep this in mind: To be successful, you must take care of your needs as well as those of the survivor.

## Take Time for Yourself

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- Eat a balanced nutritious diet. Learn about how you can maintain good eating habits to help prevent stroke and heart disease at [heart.org/nutrition](http://heart.org/nutrition).
- Get regular physical activity.
- Find time to do at least one hobby once a week.
- Spend time with your family and friends.
- Start a journal at <http://bit.ly/Kv7JIT>. Journaling can help you relieve stress, organize your thoughts and spend time by yourself.

## More Resources

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- Rx for Caregivers  
<http://bit.ly/1aUTDod>
- How Not to be Overwhelmed by the Overwhelming  
<http://bit.ly/1aEsCBQ>
- Tips from a Caregiving Pro  
<http://bit.ly/1a4Jly1>
- Caregiver Rights  
<http://bit.ly/1dd5v7c>
- Caregiver Classes  
<http://bit.ly/1dd5zUw>
- Top 10 Tips to Refresh Yourself  
<http://bit.ly/JFLutz>
- Family Caregiver Alliance  
<http://www.caregiver.org>
- Veterans Affairs Website for Caregivers  
<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/>