

Caregivers need care too

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I see more and more people who are being overdone by the constancy of caring for a loved one and are in need of respite care

If you're not sure what is meant by respite, here are some synonyms that might connect with you: rest, break, breathing space, intermission, interlude, recess, lull, pause, time out. Sounds good, right?

From the National Institute on Aging, "Respite care provides short-term relief for primary caregivers. It can be arranged for just an afternoon or for several days or weeks. Care can be provided at home, in a health care facility, or at an adult day center."

The need for respite is well documented, and yet local options are limited. For many people caring for a loved one, the ability to go away for a weekend or longer seems out of reach. For some, there's the expense to consider, but for others, it's the simple fact that respite care is difficult to find. Here are some ideas on respite care available locally.

Several of the independent, assisted living and memory care communities provide for respite care. Much of their availability depends on their current occupancy. Naturally, they prefer to have permanent residents in their facilities, but whenever possible, several offer this option. Some have a seven-day minimum and a 30-day maximum stay. Others will arrange for care for a shorter duration. Fees vary from \$100-\$175 a night and up. Remember, they all have different fees, fluctuating availability, and pre-approval requirements.

Here are a few examples of facilities that provide this service. You might call around to find others:

Village at Valley View Memory Care Community in Ashland (541-482-0888). Their "Circle of Care" program works quite well for those with dementia.

Maple Ridge independent and assisted living in Ashland (541-482-3292). They have a "guest apartment," mainly for those not needing any assistance. If a guest arrived with their caregiver, they would need to assess the situation to ensure safety.

The Springs at Anna Maria in Medford (541-774-1822) has both independent and assisted living respite options.

Pear Valley in Central Point (541-647-1285) has assisted and memory care respite options.

Now, what if you found that having respite from caregiving ensured more positive aspects of caregiving? It might mean that you could have more enjoyment from caregiving and experience fewer difficulties. Here's a list of those positive qualities of caregiving as reported to researchers:

- Feel more useful
- Feel good about self

- Feel needed
- Feel appreciated
- Feel important
- Feel strong and confident
- Give more meaning to my life
- Enable me to learn more skills
- Appreciate my life more
- More positive toward life
- Strengthened relationship
- Here are negative aspects of caregiving:
- No time for friends
- Role conflict
- Anger, frustration
- Lack of personal time

You might recognize yourself on both lists. But it's been shown that adding respite will make a big difference in increasing the positive feelings of the first list and reducing those on the second one.

It's crucial to realize that the respite needs of the caregiver are not one bit less important than the needs of those receiving assistance.

People often feel guilty if they notice their need for a break and think they should just keep on going. Too often, these caregivers get depressed, fall ill or have accidents. Without the right balance, caregiving can slowly, over time, turn into an arduous chore. Respite aids both the caregiver and the care receiver, and has a positive effect on both.

Here's a quote to remember: "When one is sick, two need help" (<https://wellspouse.org/>). Now, look at these two lists again and find ways to increase the positive while minimizing the negative. Respite could well be one of the best solutions.