

## **SELF-CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER**

### **Why is self-care important?**

Self-care means being able to take care of your own needs. This helps you to be able to be an effective caregiver. Caregivers are very important to the care of people with life-limiting illnesses. Most people receive care from family caregivers, but this is not always possible. Caring for a loved one who is seriously ill can be very stressful. It is hard work. Your ability to provide care improves when you take time to take care of yourself. It is important to be well rested to provide the best care. Here are some helpful suggestions:

### **Physical Needs**

- Remember to keep your medical or dental appointments
- Have at least 3 simple but healthy meals each day even if you need to schedule a time to eat
- Have friends or other family members help with making meals you could freeze for later
- Have your hospice nurse show you how to safely provide care to your loved one without hurting yourself
- Please take time for a nap during the day
- Limit the amount of tobacco or alcohol you use- they can cause sleep difficulties
- Attempt to get a little exercise each day, like going for a walk
- Take time for yourself to do something you enjoy like listening to music, taking a bath, reading, gardening, praying, etc.

### **Communication Needs**

- Be sure to share your worries or concerns with someone. Your hospice nurse, chaplain or social worker are available to help you. Family friends or other healthcare providers can also provide support
- Talk with your hospice nurse about symptoms to watch for in your loved one so that you are prepared to provide care when needed
- Be realistic with goals you set for yourself
- It is not unusual for things to change suddenly
- Do not hesitate to ask family, friends and other relatives for help with whatever your or your loved one needs

### **Emotional/Spiritual Needs**

- It is best to remain connected with family or friends to prevent feeling alone. Invite people to your home if you are unable to get out to visit with others
- Let your loved one say thank you to you for all that you do
- Expect to feel angry, frustrated or stressed sometimes, these are very normal responses
- Talking about what is happening with your loved one is often helpful
- Let your hospice team members know if you are feeling overwhelmed, they have resources to help you



**Emotional/Spiritual Needs (continued)**

- Attend your church or synagogue when needed
- Visit with your clergy to meet your spiritual needs
- Take short breaks outside the hours, even for a few minutes, to relax
- Have a special place all your own to go to unwind and regroup. It can be a special chair, room or a table of your own
- If you are feeling depressed, lost, scared or helpless, please let your hospice team know

If you have any questions, please call us at 262-652-4400