

Caregiver's Bill of Rights

As a caregiver, you try to strike a balance each day. You care for your loved one while keeping up with the demands of family and work. Your focus tends to be on the patient's needs. But it's also up to you to try to stay in tune with yourself.



Giving care and support during this challenging time isn't always easy. The natural response of most caregivers is to put their own feelings and needs aside. They try to focus on the person with cancer and the many tasks of caregiving. This may be fine for a short time. But it can be hard to keep up for a long time. And it's not good for your health. If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of others. It's

important for everyone that you also take care of YOU.

- I have the right to **take care of myself**. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the ability to take better care of my loved one.
- I have the right to **seek help from others** even though my loved one may object. I know the limits of my own endurance and strength.
- I have the right to **maintain parts of my own life** that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if they were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can do for this person. I have the right to do something just for myself.
- I have the right to get angry, be depressed and **express difficult feelings once in a while**.
- I have the right to **reject the attempt** by my loved one to make me do things out of guilt or anger. (It doesn't matter if they know they are doing it or not.)
- I have the right to **get consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance** for what I do for my loved one, as I offer these in return.
- I have the right to **take pride in what I am doing**. And I have the right to applaud the courage it has taken to meet the needs of my loved one.
- I have the right to **protect my individuality**. I also have the right to a life that will sustain me in times when my loved one no longer needs my full time help.

**From the NCI "When Someone You Love is Being Treated for Cancer" 2014*



Caring for the Caregivers

It is common for caregivers to provide excellent care for others but neglect their own health. It may be challenging to find the time and energy to care for yourself, but it can help you become a better caregiver. Here are a few tips to help you stay healthy, organize the chaos, and manage your stress.

- Be kind to yourself. Do something for yourself each day, even if just for a few minutes.
- Stay physically active. Even light exercise such as walking can improve mood and reduce stress.
- Find ways to connect. Share your feelings with a supportive friend or fellow caregiver. Join the Roswell Park online community at www.cancerconnect.com/roswellpark or a caregiver support group.
- Stay away from people with negative attitudes.
- Seek diversion – see friends, laugh, see a movie, take up a hobby, and **rest**.
- Set priorities and timetables. Break down large tasks into smaller parts.
- Make healthy food choices – less salt, sugar, saturated fats, and processed foods, and more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and water. Poor nutrition can affect how you feel and increase your risk of getting sick.
- Learn to accept offers of help and to ask for help. Make a “needs list” – and the next time someone offers to help, be ready with a task.
- Say “no” when you can. Be realistic about your time and energy, don’t overdo.
- If you are a sole caregiver, talk with a Patient Navigator or a Social Worker at Roswell Park about respite care programs.
- The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal program that allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a family member. For more information, go to <http://www.nfcacares.org> or call **1-800-934-2873**.



For more information on caregiving, please call or stop in The Resource Center inside the Sunflower Café on the 1st floor of the main hospital, 716-845-8659.

