



## Caregiving: Getting the support YOU need as you support a loved one, Stuart Jaffe, LGSW

Supporting a loved one who is aging or ill, with physical and/or cognitive limitations, can be a joy and an honor. It can also be a challenging stressful task for which we often have little or no training. Taking care of yourself and getting support are critical strategies along this journey.

If you are in a position of caring for a loved one, I offer the following guidance:

1. **Do not attempt to do it alone.** You are performing incredibly demanding, difficult work. You are doing so while concurrently attempting to maintain your job, your home, your life. Seek help and guidance. Identify tasks others can do (perhaps as simple as a trip to the pharmacy or the grocery or as big as a day of respite) and consider friends, family, or even paid helpers who might be able to assist.
2. **Know your feelings are valid.** As a caregiver, you are likely to feel a range of emotions from guilt to worry to anger to sadness. All of these feelings are normal and natural given your role. They don't make you a bad caregiver or a bad person. Acknowledge and accept these feelings and share them with someone you trust.
3. **Take care of yourself.** As the airlines share during takeoff, make sure your oxygen mask is secure before assisting others! To be the best caregiver you can be, you must take care of your own needs, including your emotional, physical, spiritual, and social needs.
4. **Find support.** Support groups are a great way to learn and share your journey with individuals facing similar challenges. CJFS hosts a Caregiver Support Group that meets on the third Wednesday of each month from 6:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M in the LJCC in the Senior Lounge. This group provides welcomed and needed support to anyone serving in this capacity. Try it out. In addition, CJFS has staff are experts in senior resources. Contact us at 879-3438. We are here to serve and would be honored to assist you, your family and your loved one.