

**A GUIDE FOR LGBTQ+ OLDER ADULTS,
CAREGIVERS & FAMILY MEMBERS**

CAREGIVING: EMOTIONAL IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY

**Exploring the emotional journey of caregiving — with
compassion, resilience, and hope for every step of the way.**



EMOTIONAL IMPACT

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF CAREGIVING

Caregiving is deeply meaningful work, but it also carries emotional, mental, and physical demands. Understanding the emotional impact of caregiving, the difference between resilience and burnout, and the importance of self-care is essential for long-term sustainability.

Supporting others through challenges can create strong connections and a sense of purpose, but it can also lead to emotional exhaustion. **Both experiences can exist at the same time.**

THE CHALLENGES

- Neglecting your own needs while focusing on others
- Emotional exhaustion
- Empathy fatigue
- Feelings of guilt
- Stress and overwhelm
- Balancing multiple responsibilities

THE REWARDS

- Strong connections
- A sense of purpose
- Patience
- Compassion
- Emotional strength

Resilience is not about pushing through exhaustion. It is built through support, boundaries, and realistic expectations. Caregivers who have access to support systems and take time to recharge are more likely to sustain their work without reaching burnout.

RESILIENCE:

the ability to adapt and continue showing up during difficult moments.

- Adapting during difficult moments
- Healthy boundaries
- Supported by others
- Realistic expectations
- Taking time to recharge

BURNOUT:

happens when stress becomes chronic and overwhelming.

- Stress becomes chronic and overwhelming
- Feeling drained
- Feeling detached
- Feeling ineffective
- Losing fulfillment in caregiving

SELF-CARE

CARING FOR YOURSELF WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS

Taking care of yourself is necessary, not optional. You cannot consistently support others if your own needs are unmet. Filling your cup includes both physical and emotional care. Self-care does not have to be big or time consuming. It needs to be realistic and consistent. Small moments matter more than occasional big breaks. This can look like setting boundaries, taking breaks, getting enough rest, and engaging in activities that bring you joy.

Connection is also important. Talking with others who understand your experience can reduce isolation and provide perspective.

Quick Ways to Fill Your Cup

-  Grab your favorite drink or snack
-  Step outside for fresh air
-  Listen to uplifting music while caregiving if possible
-  Drink water
-  Sit down when you can
-  Take a few deep breaths
-  Change into comfortable clothes after work
-  Give yourself something to look forward to
-  Make time for activities that recharge you
-  Pause instead of rushing every moment

Protect Your Energy

- ✓ Don't take every behavior personally
- ✓ Remind yourself you're doing enough, even if everything isn't perfect
- ✓ Say "no" when you're overwhelmed
- ✓ Keep realistic expectations
- ✓ Take your breaks
- ✓ Use respite care when available
- ✓ Give yourself permission to step out of caregiver mode

Remember:

Rest is part of the work—not something you earn after burnout.

SUPPORT & CONNECTION FOR CAREGIVERS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

Talking with others who understand your experience can reduce isolation and provide perspective.

Staying Connected & Supported

- Join a caregiver support group through your area agency on aging, other aging services, or through the LGBTQ Caregiver Center
- Talk to a coworker or friend who understands what the job is like
- Share how you are feeling instead of holding everything in
- Ask for help when something feels like too much
- Lean on people outside of work or your family when you can
- Remember that needing support does not mean you are not strong



Caregiving is not just about showing up for others. It is also about finding small ways to show up for yourself so you can keep going without losing your well being.

When to Reach Out

It may be time to ask for additional support if you are:

- Feeling emotionally exhausted most days
- Losing enjoyment in activities you once loved
- Having trouble sleeping or relaxing
- Feeling isolated or alone
- Becoming easily frustrated or overwhelmed
- Neglecting your own health and well-being



Reaching out early can help prevent burnout and make caregiving more sustainable.



STAYING CONNECTED

Caregiving can sometimes feel isolating, but you do not have to navigate it alone. Connecting with others who understand your experience can provide encouragement, practical advice, and a reminder that asking for support is a sign of strength—not weakness.

Caregiving & Respite Resources

Eldercare Locator

Find local aging and caregiver services.

National Alliance for Caregiving

Education, research, and caregiver resources.

LGBTQ Caregiver Center

Support designed specifically for LGBTQ+ caregivers.

Find a SAGECare Credentialed Provider

Locate LGBTQ+-affirming aging service providers.

Community & Connection

SAGEYou

Virtual programs and community for LGBTQ+ older adults.

SAGECollab

Educational programs and opportunities to connect.

***Caregiving is one of the greatest acts of compassion.
Remember that caring for yourself is an essential part of caring for others.***

SAGE is grateful to SAGE Intern Dulce Valenzuela, a University of Colorado Boulder student pursuing a dual degree in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology and Women and Gender Studies with a focus on advancing healthcare equity, for her contributions to this article.