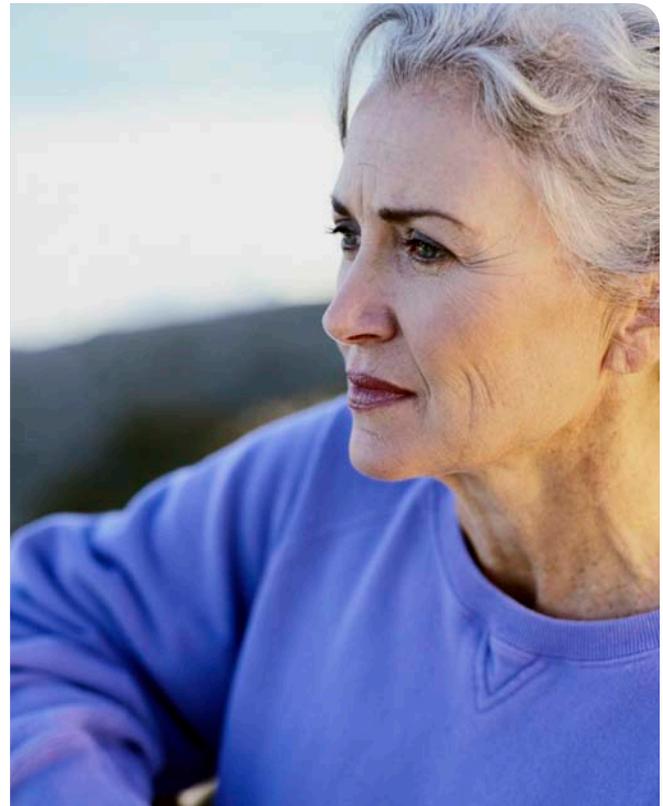




# What Are the Caregiver's Rights?

Caring for someone you love after a heart or stroke can be hard. The responsibilities and the emotional stress can cause you to forget to take care of yourself. These rights will help you remember that you have a right to health and happiness, even when you're caring for someone else. They'll help you realize that the emotions and pressures you may be feeling are normal.



## **I have the right to:**

- Take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will enable me to take better care of my loved one.
- Seek help from others even though my loved one may object. I know the limits of my own endurance and strength.
- Maintain facets of my own life that don't include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I can for this person, and I have the right to do some things for myself.
- Get angry, be depressed and express other difficult emotions at times.
- Reject any attempt to manipulate me through guilt, anger or depression.
- Receive consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance from my loved one for as long as I offer these qualities in return.

- Take pride in what I'm accomplishing and applaud the courage it takes to meet the needs of my loved one.
- Protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself. This will sustain me when my loved one no longer needs my full-time help.
- Expect and demand that, as new strides are made in finding resources to aid physically and mentally impaired persons in our country, similar strides will be made toward aiding and supporting caregivers.

## **How do I assert my rights?**

Put these Caregiver Rights where you and the person you care for can see them. Add other rights that are specific to you or highlight the ones you are most likely to sacrifice. Sharing this list of rights with the person you care for will help clear the air, give you the courage to stand up for yourself and allow you to ask for these rights without feeling guilty.

*(continued)*



### Where do I find support?

If you need help taking care of yourself while caring for a loved one, ask for information at your doctor's office. Be specific when you ask family and friends for help so you can get the time you need to take care of yourself.

Here are some resources you may contact to help you care for yourself and your loved one:

#### **National Alliance for Caregiving** **[caregiving.org](http://caregiving.org)**

This group is dedicated to providing support to family caregivers and the professionals who help them and to increasing public awareness of issues facing family caregivers.

#### **National Family Caregivers Association** **[thefamilycaregiver.org](http://thefamilycaregiver.org)**

Provides resource referrals and information for caregivers and strives to be a voice for caregivers to the public and Capitol Hill. A newsletter and caregiving greeting cards are available to members. Provides free membership to caregivers.



Sharing your feelings with friends or joining a support group may be a good way to ease the pressure you feel as a caregiver.

#### **The Well Spouse Association** **[wellspouse.org](http://wellspouse.org)**

A nonprofit group formed to provide support and advocacy for the spouses and children of the chronically ill.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **[heart.org](http://heart.org)** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **[heartinsight.org](http://heartinsight.org)**.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **[heart.org/supportnetwork](http://heart.org/supportnetwork)**.

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**Where can I find someone to sit with my loved one an hour a day?**

### My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **[heart.org/answersbyheart](http://heart.org/answersbyheart)** to learn more.