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Juggling Your Job with Caregiving: You are not alone

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Imagine having to juggle the pressures of a thriving career with the responsibilities of caring for an aging or sick loved one. If this is your reality, it's important that you know that you are not alone. There is help.

A recent study reports that 73 percent of caregivers work and two thirds of them say they must go in late, leave early, or take time from their workday in order to successfully tend to their caregiving tasks. In fact, according to the study, caregivers spend a weekly average of 20.4 hours tending to a loved one. At least 10 percent of African-American workers sampled had to quit their jobs altogether. Therefore, among the major stresses of caregiving is lost wages.

The study, by the National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with AARP, concludes that whether caring for an aging spouse or parent; a child with special needs or a sick loved one, balancing the tasks with a regular job can be overwhelming. This is especially true if the caregiving situation has come unexpectedly, if the caregiver has no help or is unable to cover new costs.

If you are a caregiver, it is important that you know that helpful resources are available to you. These are some ways that balancing caregiving and career can be made easier:

Be sure to care for yourself. Have backup like a trusted friend or family member who can take over the caregiving when you need a breather. You will be in much better spirits and your loved-one will receive better care if you are rested and are able to do other enjoyable activities.

Give yourself a break. Frustrations are common; especially among new caregivers, mainly because of what they do not know. The more you learn and realize that you are not alone, the less stress you will experience.

Seek useful information and resources. The [AARP Caregiving Resource Center](#) is a foremost source of caregiving information. The National Institute of Health is another great resource for caregivers; including its subsidiary, the National Institute on Aging (www.nia.nih.gov).

Connect with other caregivers. The dual responsibilities will always be a challenge, but talking to someone who understands will help ease stress.

Know your legal rights. ElderCare.gov says you can possibly take time off from work under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which "allows qualified employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid time off to care for a family member."

Talk with your employer. Many caregivers continue to work, mainly because they need money, they enjoy working, they're saving for retirement, working makes them feel useful, or they enjoy interacting with other people. Some employers may allow tweaks to your job schedule for greater flexibility.

Finally, be proactive. Make a list of how others can help. When someone you trust offers to help, allow them to choose from your list.

A quarter of African-Americans say the possibility of becoming a future caregiver is on their minds. This answer is significantly higher than that of the total surveyed - 20 percent. If this is on your mind, be aware that the impact of caregiving while working is well documented. If or when that time comes, be comforted in knowing you are not alone and there is help.

For additional information, tips and local resources, please visit the [AARP Caregiving Resource Center](#).
