

Balancing Work and Caregiving



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- ◆ Create a schedule that includes attention to work, caregiving, and other responsibilities.
- ◆ Talk to your employer about options to support your caregiving situation.
- ◆ Use communication strategies to ask for help managing work and caregiving responsibilities.

Introduction:

Caregiving on its own can sometimes be overwhelming and stressful. Family caregivers who are still working may find that they have trouble balancing work, caregiving, and other responsibilities. This is normal and you are not alone. In fact, a recent report found that 6 out of every 10 caregivers are working in addition to their caregiving responsibilities. However, the good news is that there are many things you can do to help balance your many responsibilities.

Create a Schedule

Creating a schedule can help you balance your various responsibilities. Here are some tips you can use when creating your schedule:

Prioritize and Delegate

When creating a schedule, you will want to write a list of all the things you have to do. Once you have finished your list, go through each item and ask yourself:

- ◆ What needs to get done today?
- ◆ What needs to get done this week?

Once you have a list of priority items, re-order the list in terms of importance. Always start with the most important and urgent matters.

It can also be helpful to ask yourself:

- ◆ What needs to be done by me?
- ◆ What can be done by others?

If there are things that need to get done that can be delegated to other people, this can give you more time to get through your own list. If you want to learn more about asking for help, be sure to read the “Assert Yourself and Ask for Help!” lesson.

Be Realistic

Although you may have many priority items to schedule, it is important to be realistic. Trying to schedule in more things than you have time for can make you feel guilty if you do not accomplish everything. Being realistic can set you up for success!

Include Self-Care

It is important to schedule in time for your own self-care because it can make you stronger and more resilient. It is easy for self-care to be forgotten or postponed when you have other things to do that seem more urgent. Try to make self-care a priority and include it in your schedule the same way you would include something like a work meeting or taking your loved one to the doctor. If you want to learn more about what kinds of self-care activities you can plan, be sure to read the “Effective Self-Care” lesson.

Some caregivers feel uncertain or guilty about taking time for themselves. If you feel that way, try to remember that self-care will help you manage stress, reduce burnout, and ultimately provide better care for your loved one.

Communicate with Your Employer

Many families have experienced caregiving. If you talk with colleagues or supervisors, their understanding and helpfulness may surprise you. Here are some tips and things to keep in mind when talking to your employer:

- 1.** Start by describing your caregiving circumstances and the situation you are in. Don't forget, you are in charge of how much of your situation you feel comfortable sharing.
- 2.** Talk to your employer sooner rather than later. This can help you come up with a plan in case of an emergency or crisis. It can also give you a chance to talk about what kind of flexibility or support you may need in the future.
- 3.** Emphasize your commitment to being productive at work and discuss ways to meet your work responsibilities while you're caregiving. When you do need help, be straightforward and direct.
- 4.** Write up a plan that both you and your employer are comfortable with. Thank your employer for understanding.
- 5.** Inform your employer if your caregiver circumstances change or progress.



QUIZ

1. Nina just started caring for her father and she is having a hard time keeping up with her responsibilities at work. In fact, her to-do list is 2 pages long. What could Nina do to feel more in control of her to-do list? (Select all that apply)
 - A. Re-organize the tasks based on priority.
 - B. Make a realistic schedule to plan when she will complete each task.
 - C. Call her sibling and insist they help her with half of the tasks.
 - D. Schedule a meeting with her employer to discuss ways she can meet her responsibilities while caregiving.
2. Nina comes to you and tells you that she's stressed and doesn't have time to complete everything on her to-do list in one day. Nina tells you she's going to cancel her yoga class for the third time this week. What would you tell Nina? (Select all that apply)
 - A. It is important to prioritize self-care because it can make her stronger and more resilient.
 - B. It is important to be realistic and stop scheduling yoga classes.
 - C. It is important to prioritize self-care because it can help her manage stress, reduce burnout, and provide better care.
 - D. Ask her if there are any tasks that others can help her with so that she has enough time to make it to yoga.

Answers: 1. A, B, D. 2. A, C. 3. A, B.

(Continued)



QUIZ

3. Nina has scheduled a meeting to talk with her employer about her caregiving situation and she is feeling nervous. What can Nina do to prepare? (Select all that apply)
- A. Schedule in time for self-care.
 - B. Decide how much of her caregiving situation she would like to share.
 - C. Send her employer an email instead of meeting face-to-face or on video call.
 - D. Postpone the meeting until she is no longer nervous.

Answers: 1. A, B, D. 2. A, C. 3. A, B.