

# Wounded Warrior

## FAMILY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



2018 Summer Edition



Summer greetings from Navy Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor. Hope you can take some time and enjoy a few activities or plan a getaway for yourself or with family. Rest, relax, recharge.

### LIVING AS A CAREGIVER



Of the 5.5 million military caregivers across the United States, nearly 20 percent care for someone who served since 9/11. Military caregivers experience more health problems, face greater strains in family relationships and have more workplace issues than non-caregivers.

You have taken on a new role. You are coping with a wounded, ill or injured loved one, changes in family dynamics, disruption in family life, and possibly financial and other pressures. This stress can also place your health at risk. Look for these warning signs of caregiver burnout:

- *Lack of energy*
- *Overwhelming fatigue*
- *Sleep problems (too much or too little)*
- *Changes in eating habits; weight loss or gain*
- *A feeling of hopelessness*
- *Withdrawing from, or losing interest in, activities you once enjoyed*
- *Neglecting your own physical and emotional needs*
- *Feeling like caregiving is controlling your life*
- *Becoming unusually impatient, irritable or argumentative—with the person you're caring for and/or with others*
- *Anxiety about the future*
- *Depression or mood swings*
- *Difficulty coping with everyday things*
- *Headaches, stomachaches, and other physical problems*
- *Lowered resistance to illness*

### RESPIRE CARE CAN HELP

It may be hard to imagine leaving your loved one in someone else's care, but taking a break can be one of the best things you do for yourself — as well as the person you're caring for. Most communities have some type of respite care available, such as:

- **In-home respite:** Health care aides come to your home to provide companionship, nursing services or both.
- **Adult care centers and programs:** Some centers provide care for both older adults and young children, and the two groups may spend time together.
- **Short-term nursing homes:** Some assisted living homes, memory care homes and nursing homes accept people needing care for short stays while caregivers are away.



## STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CAREGIVER BURNOUT



**1. Accept help.** Be prepared with a list of ways that others can help you, and let the helper choose what he or she would like to do. For instance, a friend may offer to take the person you care for on a walk a couple of times a week. Or a friend or family member may be able to run an errand, pick up your groceries or cook for you.

**2. Focus on what you are able to provide.** It's normal to feel guilty sometimes, but understand that no one is a "perfect" caregiver. Believe that you are doing the best you can and making the best decisions you can at any given time.

**3. Set realistic goals.** Break large tasks into smaller steps that you can do one at a time. Prioritize, make lists and establish a daily routine. Begin to say no to requests that are draining, such as hosting holiday meals.

**4. Get connected.** Find out about caregiving resources in your community. Many communities have classes specifically about the disease your loved one is facing. Caregiving services such as transportation, meal delivery or housekeeping may be available.

**5. Join a support group.** A support group can provide validation and encouragement, as well as problem-solving strategies for difficult situations. People in support groups understand what you may be going through. A support group can also be a good place to create meaningful friendships.

**6. Seek social support.** Make an effort to stay well-connected with family and friends who can offer nonjudgmental emotional support. Set aside time each week for connecting, even if it's just a walk with a friend.

**7. Set personal health goals.** For example, set goals to establish a good sleep routine, find time to be physically active on most days of the week, eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water. Many caregivers have issues with sleeping. Not getting quality sleep over a long period of time can cause health issues. If you have trouble getting a good night's sleep, talk to your doctor.

**8. See your doctor.** Get recommended vaccinations and screenings. Make sure to tell your doctor that you're a caregiver. Don't hesitate to mention any concerns or symptoms you have.

## EXERPTS FROM A CAREGIVER

At age 42 he was diagnosed with dementia and depression. The first reaction was basically, "What's next?"

Either you go to the corner and start crying, or you go to the other corner and start laughing and seeing the positive out of it.

I can't always be positive, 'cause I'm human. Even though I try hard...

How much can I be the strong one? How much can I be holding all these feelings? And then seeing how things have been changing, how things progress, and you don't have a way to control it... it's just tough though when there's no cure as of yet.

I can't go out there and find a job because he can't be left alone.

He would love to be more independent, but unfortunately for safety issues, just to be sure everything's going to be fine, he can't really do it by his own.

So now we're like attached. We stick together for everything, right?!

We really didn't think there was much he could do in regard to exercise. I was a little concerned. Being part of Team Navy gives Anthony a reason to be active and a sense of being part of something.

The first time he got into the recumbent bike you could see his face. It was like a little kid with a new toy! He started riding and he was like, "I need one of these for Christmas!"

Even though, I mean, I know things will not get better, it's most likely gonna get worse, just seeing his smile on his face it means the world to me. I would do anything for my family.

He deserves having as much happiness as possible, while he's still conscious about it. Because again, we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. We don't know if he'll even remember who I am. I'm just trying like to do my best on what's possible for me every single day.

I don't think about like long term when this happens or this happens. We're living today; we're doing things today. Tomorrow we'll worry about tomorrow.

I don't think him or I would change anything. As long as we have each other, we'll always be there for one another.



Carolina (left) and her husband, Anthony (right) watch athletic events at the 2018 Warrior Games



## WARRIOR GAMES FAMILY PROGRAMS

Children of NWW-SH enrollees participating in this year's Warrior Games supported Team Navy/Coast Guard at competition and enjoyed activities in between competition.

