

Caregiving: A toolkit

The @Work Toolkit is a collection of additional resources and tips that might be useful when discussing the topic with your team.

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Definitions

Family caregiver: any relative, partner, friend or neighbor who has a significant personal relationship with, and provides a broad range of assistance for, an older person or an adult with a chronic or disabling condition. These individuals may be primary or secondary caregivers and live with, or separately from, the person receiving care.

Caregiver burnout: a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. It may go along with a change in attitude — from positive and caring to negative and unconcerned. Burnout can happen when you don't get the

help you need, or if you try to do more than you're able — either physically or financially. Caregivers who are “burned out” may have fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression. Many caregivers also feel guilty if they spend time on themselves rather than on their ill or elderly loved ones.

Did You Know

“Family caregivers provide an average of 23.7 hours of care each week. This number goes up substantially for those whose care recipients live with them (37.4 hours per week), making caregiving the equivalent to a full-time job.”

Source: Aging Care

How to talk about caregiving

Education theorist Nel Noddings describes caring as a “connection or encounter between two human beings — a carer and a recipient of care, or cared for.” Noddings says that caring requires “engrossment” or deep attention as well as a genuine motivation to help.

Think about your own definition of care: What does it mean to give attention to another person? What motivates our desire to care for others?

As you read over the articles from this week, consider: Which people in our society tend to take up caregiving responsibilities? What factors do you think lead to caregiving responsibilities being relegated to mostly women, for instance? How do you think we might shift our stance on who takes up caregiving roles? Discuss the ways that caregiving roles are unevenly distributed in our society and what might help more people consider themselves as carers.