

Caregivers: Are you neglecting your own needs?

by Carol Schwark & Bob Rashkin

Answer yes or no to each question:

1. I rarely spend time any more with friends and family, or at activities I enjoy.
2. People have been telling me I look tired, need a break, etc.
3. I am tired. ALL the time.
4. More and more, my whole world is defined by the perimeters of my home.
5. Everybody feels overwhelmed from time to time, but these days I feel that way a great deal.
6. I hardly ever have a good laugh.
7. I feel quite guilty when I attend to my own needs, even if my loved one is fine at the moment.
8. In my health and in my appearance, I have let myself go.
9. Increasingly I feel irritable, nervous, snappy.

Scoring: If you answered *yes* to even one off these points, you might be over-doing your role as caregiver. The more *yes* answers you have, the more you are putting so much of yourself into caregiving that your own health is declining.

Ask yourself: If your positions were reversed, would you want your beloved to devote him/herself this extensively to your care? And is that what your beloved would want of you?

What to do: Take a break, some time off for yourself. It is not being disloyal, ungrateful, or selfish. It is being wise and healthy. Let someone else care for the patient for at least a few hours on a regular basis by maybe a relative, friend, neighbor, church member, or a professional caregiver.

Remember: In the long run your loved one will thrive all the better if you keep yourself healthy.