



Tips on the Value of Humor for Caregivers

There is nothing funny about the progressive effects of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. However, experts tell us that humor can play an important role in reducing caregiver stress while also having beneficial effects on their loved ones in the form of reducing agitation and encouraging a sense of calm.

Caregivers should grant themselves permission to laugh and not feel guilty about doing so. Remember, you're not laughing at your loved one. They are separate from the disease that can create humorous situations.

Laughter Provides both Physical and Emotional Benefits for Caregivers

In her article, "**Laughter is the Best Medicine: How to Find Humor in Caregiving**," **Mary Beth Sammons** highlights the physical and emotional benefits of laughter and provides useful suggestions to help caregivers find the humor in difficult situations.

Benefits to Caregivers include:

- Laughter can increase blood flow and heart rate, mimicking the effects of exercise.
- Some studies have shown the ability to use humor may raise the level of infection-fighting antibodies in the body and boost levels of immune cells. And, of course, increased stress is associated with reduced immune defense, so anything that helps reduce emotional stress is potentially useful to the immune system. Laughter can also help prevent burnout and depression.
- Laughter relaxes the body. For this reason, it can help with sleep and pain relief (laughter releases endorphins, the body's "feel good" chemicals).

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For those who aren't prone to creating moments to poke fun and laugh at themselves in the midst of caregiving, these tips are helpful for finding humor:

- Consider watching some comedy movies, sitcoms or listening to comedians' recordings with your loved one. YouTube is a great resource for free videos! Type in almost any subject and find funny videos of all kinds, plus clippings of old shows, such as "The Honeymooners" and "I Love Lucy."
- Encourage your loved one's sense of humor and help set an environment of levity.
- Lighten the atmosphere yourself by sharing a funny story. If your loved one has a good sense of humor, encourage it.
- Seek out books, sites and people who encourage the brighter side of caregiving. A favorite book in this category is, *Mothering Mother: A Daughter's Humorous and Heartbreaking Memoir* by Carol O'Dell, which tells about her caregiving journey with her mother who had Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's. The story is touching and will also make you laugh out loud.

North Woods Village at Edison Lakes is the area's first single-purpose residential [Memory Care Assisted Living Community](#) (MCAL) dedicated to caring for those with Alzheimer's disease, dementia and other memory impairments as well as providing education, support and resources to area caregivers and their families. The unique, [purpose-built architectural design](#) of **North Woods Village at Edison Lakes** is one element of "[NEW DIRECTIONSSM](#)" the community's signature memory care program that provides the optimal balance of loving care, dignified support, social engagement, wellness and independence.

For more information on **North Woods Village at Edison Lakes** and our [Caregiver Education & Support Calendar](#), please [contact us](#) today!

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