What Is Caregiver Burnout?
Caregiver burnout is a response to caring for a loved one who is ill. The effects of caregiver burnout are similar to the effects of depression.

Providing care for a person who has cancer takes time, work, and effort. Caregivers often tend to neglect their own physical and emotional health. Many studies show more than 50 percent of caregivers experience emotional and physical problems as a result of caregiver burnout.

What Are Signs of Caregiver Burnout?
People experience burnout differently, but it often has physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects that may include the following:

- A feeling that something bad is going to happen
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions or problem solving
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Feelings of tension
- Sleep problems
- Shaking or trembling
- Feelings of sadness or grief

It is important to educate yourself about caregiver burnout. The more you know, the better you will be able to care for your loved one with cancer.

The key to avoiding caregiver burnout is stress relief.

What Can I Do?
It is important to take steps to relieve stress related to caregiver burnout. Here are some tips:

- Ask for help. Family members and friends may be able to help with caregiver responsibilities.
- Allow someone else to take over caregiver duties so you can get a break. This can be coordinated through family, friends, and neighbors.
- Talk it out. Consider meeting with a counseling or support group.
- Allow yourself to grieve—to cry, to feel numb, to be angry, or to feel however you’re feeling.
- Pay attention to your health. Eat well, exercise, and get plenty of rest.
- Take things one day at a time. Understand you will have good days and bad days.
- Educate yourself. Knowing all you can about your loved one’s cancer may help you feel more in control and help you set realistic expectations.

Huntsman Cancer Institute’s Patient and Family Support Service is a resource for people experiencing caregiver burnout. To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-585-9755.

The Linda B. and Robert B. Wiggins Wellness-Survivorship Center offers classes and services for caregivers, including art, acupuncture, cooking, massage, group fitness classes, and meditation. For more information, call 801-587-4585.