

Tip Sheet # 30

Dealing with Other Things in My Life

You may be wondering whose needs come first. Everyone seems to want a piece of your time. Don't expect yourself to be perfect. Caregivers may have to balance work with caregiving. Younger caregivers may have children at home. Whether you are a spouse, adult child, or other type of caregiver, here are some ideas for trying to balance some of the competing areas of your life.

What about taking care of the other things in my life?



Balancing work and caregiving

- Think about whether or not your stroke survivor can stay alone.
 - How much can your survivor do for him or herself?
 - What kind of help is needed?
 - How long could your survivor stay alone?
 - See **Tip Sheet #26 Finding care for the survivor while I am away.**
- Caregivers who are employed use different ways of combining home responsibilities and work.
 - Some workers cut back on their hours.
 - Some people are able to rearrange their hours.
 - Some families work around each other's work hours to provide care.
 - Caregivers might be able to job share.
 - Some change jobs.
 - Some can work remotely or at home while providing care.
 - Others end up quitting their jobs.
- Talk with your supervisor about your situation.

- Come up with a plan that will meet your needs and the needs of your workplace.
- Keep your focus on your employer's goals.
- Suggest a trial period.
- Contact the employee assistance program at your workplace.
- Contact the Human Resources department about Family Medical Leave.
 - Unpaid leave can be taken for up to 12 weeks
 - Leave can be taken for a few hours or days at a time if the employer agrees to the arrangement.
 - An employer can require vacation and sick days be taken at the beginning of the leave.
 - For more information, contact the United States Department of Labor (website accessed on 10/15/10) at <http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/index.htm> or call 1-866-4-USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).
- If your job requires travel, look at different arrangements for care. **See Tip Sheet #26 Finding care for the survivor while I am away.**
 - Consider whether other family members can stay with your survivor. **See Tip Sheet #29 Finding the best way to ask family and friends for help.**
 - Maybe this would be a good time for the survivor to take a “vacation” to another family member's home.
 - Look into temporary live-in help or respite care at an assisted living home.
- **Sometimes a caregiver has to say “NO” to an employer or to a job in order to provide care.** You may need to think of other types of employment, or how to make ends meet. Talk with family and friends for ideas. Talk with other caregivers to see how they have dealt with providing care. You may need to talk with a financial advisor for advice. **See Tip Sheet #23 Covering the cost of the survivor's healthcare** for ideas on how to manage costs on a reduced income.



Caring for children at home

- Let children know they are important and loved.
- Be honest with children about what is happening.
- Take time to listen to children's concerns.
- Be creative in setting aside time for the child.
- Remember that children pick up on emotions and stress. Their behavior may reflect a tense situation.
- Include children in the care of the stroke survivor.
 - Small children can do simple tasks or draw pictures.
 - Older children can talk about their day or read to the survivor.
 - Let children help as long as they feel comfortable.
 - Include the survivor in helping with children as they are able.

How can I learn more about taking care of the other things in my life?

- Talk with other stroke caregivers.
- Contact the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-800-478-7653 or www.strokeassociation.org
- Talk with the employee assistance program at work.

Where do I find more information about taking care of the other things in my life?

- Take a look at **Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB3. Maintaining realistic schedule and expectations.** This tip sheet will help you to rethink your daily schedule. Are you trying to do too much? How can you fit in your daily schedule what is most important?
- Read about time management techniques.
- Read about caregiving.
 - Stroke Connection Magazine 1-888-478-7653 or online at www.strokeassociation.org

- Today's Caregiver Magazine 1-800-829-2734 or online at www.caregiver.com
- Stroke Support Family Network 1-888-478-7653 or online at www.strokeassociation.org
- Family Caregiver Alliance/National Center on Caregiving at 1-800-445-8106 or www.caregiver.org
 - Free information, publications and online discussion
- Join a support group. **Tip Sheet #8 has a list of support groups.**
 - Contact the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-478-7653 or www.strokeassociation.org