

RECOGNIZING YOUR ROLE AS A CAREGIVER

For many years, I did not recognize that I was a caregiver.

I was simply a daughter doing what daughters do. Caring for my 96-year-old mother has been one of the most difficult and rewarding experiences of my life. Like so many others, it did not have a name other than daughter. I was helping with appointments, advocating on her behalf, making sure she was safe and fed at home. I did it out of love, responsibility, and devotion. I did not do it with a title.

In many of our communities, including Spanish-speaking communities, the word “caregiver” is not common in our families. The act of caring for someone we love is honored, expected, and deeply rooted in culture and family. We identify ourselves by our relationships: daughter, son, spouse, grandchild, neighbor, friend. We do not always pause to recognize that this care has a name, or that help exists for those providing it.

But caring for a loved one is caregiving, and caregivers deserve support. In New York City, an estimated 1.3 million people provide unpaid care to a family member, friend, or neighbor. Nationally, that number reaches 63 million. Caregivers are not alone, yet the experience can feel isolating. Caregiving can bring purpose and connection, but it can also



bring exhaustion, stress, and financial strain. It can affect emotional and physical health, work, and family life. Most caregivers are women, and many spend an average of 30 hours a week providing care. That time adds up.

This is why NYC Aging works closely with community partners to ensure caregivers know they are seen, valued, and supported. Across the city, we sponsor caregiver programs that connect caregivers with social workers who provide guidance on caregiving challenges, government benefits, and available services. These programs offer education, advocacy, and practical support so caregivers do not have to navigate this journey alone.

Caregiver respite is a critical part of that support. Respite gives caregivers time to rest, attend

medical appointments, or focus on other responsibilities. It may look like a home care attendant or another supportive service that allows caregivers a moment to recharge. Caring for yourself is not selfish. It is essential.

In the coming weeks, NYC Aging will launch a public awareness campaign focused on caregiving. It will help New Yorkers recognize what caregiving looks like, understand that many people are caregivers without realizing it, and learn how to connect to support. Caregiving should not be invisible. Neither should caregivers.

If you are caring for a family member over the age of 60, someone living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia, or if you are over 55 and raising a grandchild or caring for an adult with a disability between the ages of 18 and 59, help is available. You can call Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NYC (212-244-6469) to learn about programs near your home and the supports you may be eligible for. Please know this: you are not alone. NYC Aging is here to help.



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