



CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER – THIS MEANS YOU

Being a caregiver is never easy. Beyond dealing with medical issues, parents of a child with special needs deal with the emotional well-being of their child and the impact the special need has on the entire family. There is never enough time in life, and you may feel overwhelmed and overworked.

In these circumstances, ***you must take care of yourself***. It's hard to do, but essential – not just for yourself, but also for your child. Remember that to take care of your child, you must maintain and promote your own foundation and well-being so you can continue to manage your child's ongoing challenges. Caring for yourself is, in essence, caring for your child.

As a caregiver, you may feel isolated and find it difficult to share your innermost feelings. However, speaking up is one of the best ways to reduce that feeling of isolation. Caring for your child can become a little easier when you realize that you are not alone in your journey. There are other parents thinking and feeling much the same way you do. As parents of a child with special needs, we cannot change the situation; however, we can change the way we take care of ourselves as we care for our child.

Here are some ways to help yourself:

- ❖ Talk to your friends and maintain friendships
- ❖ Seek and accept the support of others
- ❖ Set goals for yourself, your child and your family
- ❖ Identify and acknowledge your feelings
- ❖ Seek professional counseling when you need it
- ❖ Attend to your own healthcare needs
- ❖ Get enough rest, proper nutrition, and regular exercise
- ❖ Take time off *without feeling guilty*
- ❖ Change the way you view certain situations. Remember with the good comes some bad, and with the bad comes some good.
- ❖ Contact Family TIES of Massachusetts' Parent-to-Parent Program at 800-905-TIES (8437)