

CAREGIVER GUIDE

A USEFUL TOOL



**BRAIN ANEURYSM
FOUNDATION**

Working Towards a World Without Ruptures

OUR MISSION

Provide information about and raise awareness of the symptoms and risk factors of brain aneurysms to prevent ruptures and subsequent death and disability.

Work with medical communities to provide support networks for patients and families.

Advance research to improve patients' outcomes and save lives.



Family and close friends play a key role in a patient's recovery. You can be your loved one's eyes and ears, advocate for good care, and encourage and support their healing. Many survivors make nearly a full recovery, with some residual deficits, but the process is long—taking weeks, months, or even years. Supporting a survivor requires patience and understanding.

Use this guide, which provides practical tools, encouragement, and resources as you support your loved one and navigate your caregiver journey.

EMBRACING THE NEXT CHAPTER TOGETHER

Once your loved one returns home from the hospital or rehabilitation facility, the hard work begins. With some survivors, deficits can alter their personality and temperament, so accepting this “new” person is the first step in helping them recover and move ahead.

Often, the deficits might not be obvious at first, but nonetheless impact your loved one’s functioning and ability to interact with others at home, in the workplace, or in social settings.

The following will help with the recovery process:

- Set small, achievable goals for you and the survivor.
 - Be aware of your loved one’s strengths and weaknesses, physically and cognitively, so you can prevent them from adding stress to your lives.
 - Seek therapy, whether individual and/or group therapy, to work through your own emotions.
 - Join a brain aneurysm support group at **bafound.org** or connect with others on the Brain Aneurysm Foundation’s online support community at **bafsupport.org**.
 - Develop a plan, reward yourself, and always talk to one another.
 - Find time to have fun together.
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“The simple
act of caring
is heroic.”

- Edward Albert



BALANCING COMPASSION FOR YOUR LOVED ONE — AND YOURSELF

It is not unusual for a family member to experience emotional distress at any phase of the rehabilitation process. Often, the family member is unaware of the distress because the primary focus is always on the survivor's needs. You, the caregiver, are also in need of professional help during this family crisis.

The family member of the survivor experiences a broad range of intense emotions, such as shock, fear, worry, anger, frustration, and hopelessness.

As the rehabilitation process unfolds, these emotions may continue to prey on you and further add to your suffering. Depression, worry, anger, and grief may pile on top of your own fragile emotions. You might feel guilty and brush this feeling aside because you are so anxious to take proper care of your loved one. You may find it difficult to fully express and explore your feelings if the survivor is present.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Others in your situation probably undergo the same feelings, and you are not alone. The emotional distress that you may experience is a natural part of the rehabilitation process and you must realize that self-care is just as important as survivor care. Your emotional well-being is necessary for a positive outcome for both you and the brain aneurysm survivor.

There are many forms of emotional distress. You, the caregiver, should not view these depressed, anxious, or hopeless moods as a sign of weakness. When you realize the gamut of emotions that you have experienced from the beginning of the aneurysm episode until the present, you will begin to appreciate how stressful life has been for you as well as for your loved one. It is important to release your emotions and understand how common your feelings are.

**As the caregiver, you must remember
that your emotional well-being is crucial to
the progress of the survivor's health.**

**You must recognize and tend to your own
emotional struggles in order to be successful.**

If you are the primary caregiver, consider the benefits of a support group, a caregiver support group, or private therapy. It will be a safe harbor to moor your emotions during this turbulent time.

10 TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

- 1 | Caregiving is a job and respite is your earned right. Reward yourself with respite breaks often.
- 2 | Watch out for signs of depression, and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
- 3 | When people offer to help, accept the offer and suggest specific things that they can do.
- 4 | Educate yourself about your loved one's condition and how to communicate effectively with doctors.
- 5 | There's a difference between caring and doing. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
- 6 | Trust your instincts. Most of the time, they'll lead you in the right direction.
- 7 | Caregivers often do the lifting, pushing, and pulling. Be good to your back.
- 8 | Grieve for your losses and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
- 9 | Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- 10 | Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and a citizen.



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