



# Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter's Guide for Caregivers

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**No Known Cause.  
No Known CURE.  
Together, WE CAN Change That!  
It All Begins With You!**

## My New Role - Caregiver

### Now What Do I Do?



Today may be the day you just learned that you are now a caregiver, this could be a new role for you, or maybe one you have taken on before.

**No matter how you got where you are, being a caregiver can come with many feelings.**

At the Scleroderma Foundation, we understand that caregivers will go through many phases especially as you first begin to provide care for your loved one.

Most care givers have not had formal training and may feel they are not adequate in their roles. The many responsibilities of being a caregiver can present challenges that are difficult and overwhelming.

The good news is you CAN do this and we have created this manual to provide you with some tips and tools to assist you. Your role may not be the easiest one you have taken on in your lifetime, but it can be the most rewarding and fulfilling.

The goals of caregiving are for you and your loved one to remain safe and secure in your environment and to locate the resources that will make caregiving as positive of an experience as possible.

The medical information in this manual is provided as an informational resource only, and is not to be used or relied on for any diagnostic or treatment purposes. Please consult your health care provider, or contact a licensed therapist if you have any specific questions regarding your feelings, concerns toward your loved one, or if you think you are having trouble coping.

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# Feelings

Here are some feelings you may find yourself experiencing as a caregiver:

- Denial
- Fear/Anxiety
- Anger
- Resentment
- Guilt
- Grief
- Acceptance



# Denial

The first emotion you may feel as a caregiver might be denial. It is common to hear at some point in your life that, "You are in denial."

More than likely you heard this expression in terms of denial of a fact. In life when we do not like a situation, experience or we find our lives are in direct conflict with how we thought our life would be, it is human nature that one may deny their feelings.

Denying feelings can be caused by traditions, values, morals or the way you were raised. If you find yourself denying feelings about a specific situation you can reflect deeper into the reason you may be in denial with the assistance of a professional. Trained professional can help you find the reason you are in denial and the best way you can move forward in life.

Being in denial is considered to be a defense mechanism and something humans often do to protect themselves from unpleasant situations or conflicts.

As a caregiver you may find yourself denying the following:

- The health condition of your loved one
- Your ability to care for your loved one
- Your true feelings about being a caregiver
- Your feelings toward other family members who are not helping with the care of the loved one
- What being a caregiver is doing to your health



## **Fear/Anxiety**

As a caregiver, you may find yourself fearing or being anxious about many things; all the responsibilities you now are faced with, medical issues with your loved one, the unknown future and even whether or not you can be the type of care giver you want for your loved one. It is normal to feel afraid or to be anxious about being a caregiver. There are many unknowns that have suddenly been placed into your life.

If you find yourself not being able to cope with your feelings of fear or anxiety, and they are interfering with your life, it is advisable that you seek medical advice from a professional.

### **Symptoms of fear:**

- **Headaches**
- **Tension in muscles**
- **Stomach and intestinal disruption**
- **Being overly tired**
- **Inability to sleep**
- **Restlessness**
- **Heart palpitations**
- **Feeling dizzy**
- **Sweating**
- **Exhaustion**
- **Inability to focus or concentrate**
- **Having trouble problem solving**
- **Not being able to do normal daily tasks**
- **Body shaking**



## What To Do When You Feel Anxious



- Join a support group for care givers.
- Get counseling from a licensed professional.
- Find someone you trust that you can talk to and share your feelings on a regular basis. Talking about how you feel is the first step to managing them in a healthy way.
- Exercise daily. Exercising can help your body relax and reduce the stress.
- Seek spiritual support from a church of your choice.
- Talk to your physician about your feelings and keep him/her aware of any changes in the way you feel.
- Use breathing techniques and mediation as a means of relaxing.
- Engage in hobbies you enjoy on a regular basis.
- Continue to maintain social interactions outside of your caregiver role.

## What Not To Do When You Feel Anxious

- Blame your loved one for the situation you are in or for your feelings.
- Yell or scream at your loved one or others because you are feeling anxious.
- Bottle up your feelings inside.
- Stop taking any physician prescribed medication without medical advice.

## Anger

Being a caregiver to your loved one can be a difficult and demanding role. Often you are not a trained professional, rather just a family member who has been placed in this role suddenly and unexpectedly. You may have had to leave your employment situation, you may no longer be able to enjoy activities outside of your home and your time can now be so limited that you and your close friends may not be able to spend as much time together as you previously did.

All of these situations can cause feelings of anger to emerge for a caregiver. While anger is one of the most normal feelings for caregivers, it can also be the hardest for caregivers to experience.

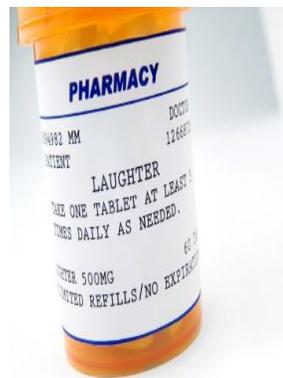
Anger can be expressed toward a loved one, toward other family members and toward others. Situations can cause anger to suddenly arise and without justification. When this occurs, the caregiver can become conflicted. Often feelings of anger are irrational and not warranted but nonetheless very real for a caregiver. Some caregivers feel trapped, isolated and alone. Others feel empowered, entrusted and well loved. Everyone is an individual and your feelings will be different based on your given situation.

For caregivers who do not properly express feelings of anger, issues can arise. It is advisable to seek medical treatment from a physician, therapist or counselor if you think you are not properly dealing with your anger. As a caregiver if you ever find yourself thinking about or acting out on feelings of doing harm to your loved one, it is mandatory that you reach out for help. Call a hot line, a local crisis center, CareNet, the Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter (248) 595-8526 or even 911. You are never alone, and you should never feel that way, seek help before it gets to the point where your anger controls you.

Remember, feelings of anger do not go away, so if you are simply burying them and denying them, in time they will surface. They will come up in other aspects of your life through resentment, guilt and even depression. This can affect your sleep patterns, eating habits, and in turn your health.

## Ways to Avoid Anger As A Caregiver

- When someone offers to help you, accept the offer without feeling guilty.
- Stay organized, have a well-established daily plan.
- Continue to enjoy at least one of your hobbies on a regular basis.
- Take well deserved breaks away from your care giving duties.
- If you cannot get breaks from care giving, then try and plan breaks in the day when your loved is resting, sleeping or turn on the television and take even a ten minute break.
- Schedule in exercise time daily, even ten minutes a day will be beneficial to your overall health.
- Be honest with family members about the demands of your role.
- Allow family members and friends to share in the responsibilities and care of your loved one as needed.
- Continue to enjoy social situations as you are able to and maintain friendships.
- Weekly, do something special for yourself.
- Never forget the power of laughter and how it can help you to maintain a positive attitude.



## Resentment

We are living in a world that is filled with so many obligations, work, family, employment, hobbies, social media, entertainment and even hobbies can be demanding on our time. Now you are a caregiver trying to struggle with finding the time to care for a loved one, and handle all of the other roles and responsibilities in your life. What the heck is a person to do?

Resentment comes into play easily and without notice as a caregiver struggles to find the right balance with care giving needs, professional needs and personal needs. Caregivers can feel like they are walking a tight rope every day, balancing between what they have to do and what they want to do. Time is just moving too quickly and the day suddenly does not hold enough hours to manage to get everything done.

The result can often be feelings of resentment. This is very normal and understanding given the situation. Juggling so many commitments can force these feelings to surface and if you are someone who has never felt this way before, it can be difficult to manage those feelings.

Caregivers may start to resent their loved ones, other family members who are able to continue to live their lives untouched by the illness or disease that affects your loved one or others around you that are encouraging you to remain optimistic.

Resentment can sometimes feel like feelings of anger or even guilt. If you have not experienced these feelings before you may be unsure why you are even feeling the way you are and you may try to dismiss your feelings as unimportant.

The best approach to take is to understand your feelings, accept them as being normal and try to manage them. If you find yourself acting out on them in unacceptable ways, seek the counselor and care of a licensed therapist or your physician. Seeking treatment is not a sign of weakness, rather a sign of strength and the desire to do the best for yourself and for your loved one. Talking about your feelings openly and honestly can also be a healthy approach to managing them.

# Guilt

Feelings of guilt can often accompany being a caregiver. One day you wake up feeling positive about your role, and the next you feel less than happy about taking your loved one to the doctor as opposed to heading off to the gym for your favorite work out.

You may begin to feel resentment because you can no longer spend your free time doing what you enjoy and you are now caring for someone else's needs verses your own. As those feelings start to linger, suddenly in comes the GUILT!

Just when you thought you were doing so well with handling the resentment, now you are feeling guilty about even that! Your emotions begin to feel as if you are on a roller coaster ride at your favorite amusement park. The only problem is, you want off, and you want to get off NOW!

The good news is, you can stop feeling guilty with some tips and easy steps:

## Ways to manage your guilt:

- Accept your feelings as they come and deal with them, even the ones that are difficult such as resentment and anger.
- Don't let feelings bottle up, talk about your feelings and emotions as you experience them.
- Realize that there may be days when you do not like being a caregiver and that is understandable and acceptable, tomorrow is a new day and with it will come new experiences.
- Allow yourself to have an "off day" once in a while without judging or trying to analyze everything you are feeling or doing.
- Know that sometimes the role of caregiving is overwhelming and with that role will come a flood of emotions, some positive, some negative.

- Be honest with yourself about what you are feeling and do not try to be a hero in your role as a caregiver. No one is asking you to do everything so accept help when it is offered, or ask for help when you need it.
- If you find yourself having a bad day, take a break, do something relaxing, something special for yourself and allow yourself to enjoy it!
- If you find yourself feeling guilty day after day, stop and try to determine where the guilt is coming from.
- Journal daily or even once a week to help you release your feelings and put them down on paper. This is also a great way to make a memory log for yourself later in life to reflect back on what an amazing job you really did as a caregiver.
- If you feel guilty because you had to miss your friend's birthday party due to caring for your loved one, then simply pick up the phone and make plans with your friend to take her/him to a special lunch when you have the opportunity. If you are house bound caring for a loved one, then invite your friend over for a lunch. You will find that friends understand and will be more than supportive.
- Know that nine out of ten times, it is our expectations that are not met and no one else's in life and thus the guilt we often feel is not real. Review your expectations of the situation and make sure they are truly realistic.
- Laugh every day, smile every hour and remember that whatever challenge you are facing, it will pass!



## Grief

As a caregiver you can experience grief at various times, the beginning of your new role, during your time as a caregiver to your loved one, or after the death of your loved one. Since caregiving is a demanding role, along with those demands will come many emotions.

In the beginning of your role as a caregiver, you may grieve the loss of your previous life, the freedoms you have lost or even the control over your life that you had prior to becoming a caregiver. Suddenly you are making the decisions for someone else and there is little time left for you to do the things you enjoyed in life. It is normal to experience grief and loss of these elements of your life.

As a caregiver you may be going along with a routine and then suddenly experience grief when you least expected it. This is also very normal and can be caused by the realization that your loved one's health condition is worsening, may not ever get better or you perceive your role is unending and this fact frightens you. To grieve all of this loss is normal and understandable.

Upon the death of your loved one, you may find yourself left with grief; questioning whether you did a good enough job as a caregiver. You may wonder if there was more you could have done for your loved one or if the care you provided was what your loved one truly needed and was adequate.

These feelings of grief for caregivers will come and if appropriately dealt with will leave just as quickly as they appeared.

### **Here are some tips to help you manage your feelings of grief:**

- Join a support group and maintain their support even after the death of your loved one.
- Take the time to identify and determine what you are grieving specifically and address the loss.
- Discuss your feelings with someone close to you.

- Seek professional help if your feelings of grief do not subside over time or become overwhelming and prohibit you from living a well balance life, eating, sleeping or enjoying hobbies you like to do in your free time.
- Exercise daily in some form, even chair yoga, Tai Chi or stress relief breathing techniques can be helpful in reducing grief.
- Do not isolate or stay home alone, get out and enjoy social situations. Staying active will help to keep you in a positive frame of mind.
- Establish a routine so you do not have laps in the day when you are just bored. It is during these times that grief becomes overwhelming and depression can set in.
- Make appointments, arrange outings with friends and make sure that you are doing something daily especially during the first few months after the death of your loved one.
- Know that there are not time lines for how long you will grieve, everyone is different. A good guide is that if your grief is stopping you from enjoying life, you want to seek professional assistance from a medical professional. The amount of time it will take to significantly grieve will depend on the relationship you had with your loved one. If you have had a history of depression, it may take longer.





## Acceptance

Acceptance, what an amazing word that is but for many caregivers who have just taken on the role and all the responsibilities that come with the position, it can be like climbing up a very large mountain to get to this point. Caregivers must travel through so many other emotions that often once they come to acceptance, they are not sure they are even there!

Acceptance can be a peaceful place or somewhere you have arrived at because you are too tired to fight all the other emotions and you simply want to find comfort. However you have found your way to this emotion, welcome!

Acceptance means you have learned to weather the other emotions, you are finding balance and you are ready to tackle the obstacles ahead of you. It does not mean you like all of this, it just means you are doing your very best to cope. Be proud of yourself, pat yourself on the back, look yourself in the mirror every morning and remind yourself just how incredible you are. Someone needs to, and why shouldn't it be you?

### Ways to find acceptance:

- Let go of what you cannot control. Stop trying to do everything yourself, ask for help, accept help when it is offered and don't try to be more than you can be.
- Look for the good in situations rather than always seeing the bad. Every situation has good and bad in it. Since it is just as easy to find the bad as it is

to see the good, why not spend the small amount of time you have in life looking for good things to focus on.

- Surround yourself with positive people. Positive people will help you feel good about yourself and thus you will feel less anger, less frustration and less resentment.
- Make sure you are caring for your own needs as well as your loved one. If you are not healthy in mind, body and spirit, you cannot be an effective caregiver.
- Find a good support system early on and maintain that relationship on a regular basis.
- Don't judge yourself or your actions so harshly, reflect daily on even the smallest of tasks that turned out favorably. Journal daily so you can keep track of the triumphs and the challenges that come.
- Determine a reward system for yourself and regularly treat yourself to something special that you enjoy possibly, a meal away from your loved one, an extra hour of reading, going to the gym even though there is laundry piled up or picking up a pizza one evening a week instead of cooking. Small rewards will add up and serve to remind you of just how incredible you truly are!
- Write yourself a thank you note and place it on your mirror or somewhere you will see every morning when you get up and every evening when you go to sleep. This will also serve as a reminder of what an important job you are doing.
- Set daily goals and if you are unable to accomplish them, forgive yourself!



## Tips on How to Cope with Feelings

1. Accept your feelings as they come.
2. Understand that you may suddenly have very strong reactions to situations.
3. Find a good support system in your life, a friend, a church, a support group, someone who will be there to listen to you when you need to vent.
4. Realize that sometimes your feelings may not be positive and accept this.
5. As a caregiver you may find yourself being fearful of the future, situations that you cannot control and the unknown. Know that this is normal!
6. There will be times when you may feel anxiety about being a caregiver, you may doubt your choices and you even question your actions. Know this is normal!
7. There will be days when you may feel frustrated because your loved one is not reacting in the manner you desire him/her to. You may also feel this same emotion when you see relatives living their lives care freely as you did before becoming a caregiver. Know this is normal!
8. Sometimes as a caregiver, you may feel angry. Anger can be directed toward your loved one, toward the situation you have suddenly been placed in, or in others you encounter. Often caregivers feel that they are alone and that all of the responsibility is being unfairly placed on them. This can also cause anger to be felt. These are all normal feelings!
9. Enjoy the good times and focus less on the bad ones. If you find yourself always thinking negatively, work hard to find the positive aspects that surround your life. They are there, just keep looking! Some days it may be a challenge to locate them, but there will be small gifts you will find along this journey if you open your mind and heart to your role as a caregiver.
10. Love yourself enough to forgive yourself for not being perfect! Your loved one does not have a manual that he/she comes with. You are not trained and in most cases no one asked you if you wanted to become a caregiver. All of these changes in your life can be difficult and just know that you will not make all the right decisions. Be willing to ask for help, seek resources and again, love yourself unconditionally!

## Taking a Break from Care Giving

As a caregiver, it is mandatory that you remember to take frequent breaks away from your loved one. This can be difficult and may come with feelings of guilt and fear. At first, you may struggle with the concern that your loved one is not being cared for properly because you are not there to oversee the type of care that you normally provide. You may worry that in your absence, your loved one may become sicker, need medical attention or miss you. These are all very normal feelings and if you plan accordingly for your time away, your concerns can all be dealt with in a logical manner.



### Rest and renewal tips for caregivers

- Stop worrying about having a perfectly clean home and enjoy spending more time caring for your needs.
- Ask a trustworthy family member, friend or home healthcare aide to come on a regular basis to care for your loved one while you get out.
- Locate a licensed and trustworthy adult day care program that you can drop your loved one off at while you spend time away.
- Take a vacation without feeling guilty and have your loved one stay at an assisted living facility or with family members.
- Ask someone you trust to come over daily, weekly or monthly to assist you with caregiving tasks while you get away, take a break or even enjoy one of your hobbies.
- Make the most of the time away that you have and do not spend it feeling guilty. Enjoy your time away from your loved one and know you will be a better caregiver because you are taking care of yourself!

# I Can Do Everything!



So many caregivers think that they can do everything for their loved one, tend to the house, work, manage the financial responsibilities, cook, and even be a health care advocate. As caregiver you will need to wear so many hats that when the opportunity for you to share some of the roles you have taken on appears, it is advisable that you take it.

Here is a short list of some of the responsibilities you can seek assistance with for your loved one:

- Ask a family member or friend to help with the grocery shopping.
- Allow others to assist with lawn care and yard maintenance.
- Assign a family member or trustworthy friend banking tasks.
- Hire a high school or college student to come weekly to clean the house. This can be a less expensive alternative to hiring a cleaning service.
- Make an arrangement with a neighbor to have them take out your trash and recyclables weekly.
- Call a local college and ask if a student in the nursing program would be interested in coming over daily for an hour or two to interact with your loved one, providing you with the opportunity to take a break or do other household tasks.
- Request that family members prepare one meal a week for your family in an effort to assist you in having more to be a caregiver to your love.
- When appropriate, alternate who takes your loved one to their medical appointments, freeing up your time.
- Accept offers from family, friends and neighbors when they offer help of time, services or emotional support. If you say no, let them know it is only a no for today and that you will need their help another day. Allowing others to provide help is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a sign of strength and courage. Know you cannot be an effective caregiver without emotional and physical support of others.



## Do I Have Caregiver Burnout?

### What Are The Signs?

As a caregiver, the demands of tending to the needs of your loved one can often lead one to become burned out and overwhelmed. This list shows some signs and symptoms of burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed that you may begin to notice. If you are noticing these signs and symptoms, it is advisable that you seek medical and professional treatment.

- Feeling of being depressed or sadness
- Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- Stomach and GI Issues
- Chronic headaches
- Lack of empathy for loved one, situations or self
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Chronic illness, viral or bacterial
- Frequent fighting and arguing with friends, family members and co-workers
- Tardiness for appointments, work schedules or scheduled tasks
- Continued frustration and the inability to manage it
- Unrealistic anger and inability to properly direct anger
- Trouble with maintaining relationships
- Frustration and inability to communicate in constructive manners
- Exhausted and lacking energy
- Feelings of doom and despair
- Always viewing situations with negativity and limited senses
- Stop enjoying social situations
- Wanting to stay home and not do anything other than care for loved one
- Viewing your situation as hopeless, forced or never changing
- Inability to laugh, smile or enjoy your life
- Change in eating habits. Overeating or not wanting to eat



## How Can I Prevent Caregiver Burnout?

As a caregiver, it is important that you make every attempt to avoid burnout. Here is a list of ways in which you can help to avoid burnout. Remember, the prevention of burnout begins with you! You need to take good care of yourself in order to take great care of your loved one.

- Be willing to ask for help from family and friends.
  
- Learn to accept help when it is offered. If the help is not something you can use today, consider what else the person could do for you to make your situation more manageable. Do not be afraid to ask someone if they are willing to do something else for you. Chances are if they were willing to offer their time to do one thing, they will be more than happy to do something else for you and your loved one.
  
- Do not miss any of your own medical appointments or scheduled medical testing appointments. Your health is just as important as that of your loved one.
  
- Eat three to six nutritional meals a day. Make sure you are eating healthy and well balanced meals.
  
- Get 6 to 8 hours of sleep daily.
  
- When appropriate, take a few moments to just lay down or sit in a chair and rest. This break can serve to relax and rest your mind, body and spirit.
  
- Maintain a doctor approved exercise regime.

- Stay properly hydrated-drink 6 to 8 glasses of water. Keeping your body hydrated will help to keep it healthy and in turn will keep you healthy.
- Take a daily break from caregiving tasks, even if it means you just read ten pages from your favorite book, take a quick hot bath, or walk around the block. Mini breaks can rejuvenate your mind and keep your mental health focused on the positive.
- Journal and write daily inspirational notes to yourself about your progress as a caregiver. On the days you are experiencing obstacles, journal your feelings and how you can problem solve the situation. Reward yourself for making it through a difficult day by doing something special for yourself.
- Set routines that are attainable and realistic. Routines can help a caregiver to stay organized. When you are forced to go off of your schedule be flexible and know that you will return to the schedule soon.
- Allow yourself to go on a vacation without your loved one so you can relax and enjoy the time away. Arrange for a trustworthy family member, friend or assisted living facility to care for your loved one in your absence. You will come back feeling so refreshed and rejuvenated.
- Maintain contact with friends and continue to go out in social situations. This will help to keep you from feeling isolated or trapped in your caregiving role.



# Resources for Caregivers

Scleroderma Foundation

[www.scleroderma.org](http://www.scleroderma.org)

Assisted Living

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/assistedliving.html>

Family Care Navigator-  
State By State Guide

[http://caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/fcn\\_content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=2083](http://caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/fcn_content_node.jsp?nodeid=2083)

Home Care Services

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/homecareservices.html>

Long Term Care Information

<http://longtermcare.gov/>

National Respite Care Locator

<http://archrespice.org/respitelocator>

Nursing Home Comparison

<http://www.medicare.gov/NursingHomeCompare/search.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

Hospice Care

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hospicecare.html>

Hospital Compare

<http://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/>

Caring From a Distance

<http://www.cfad.org/>

Handbook for Long Distance Caregivers

[http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content/pdfs/op\\_2003\\_long\\_distance\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content/pdfs/op_2003_long_distance_handbook.pdf)

Long Distance Caregiving Tips from the National Institute of Health

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/so-far-away-twenty-questions-and-answers-about-long-distance-caregiving>

## Resources for Caregivers Continued

Caregivers of a Spouse or Partner

<http://www.wellspouse.org/>

Checklists and Forms for Caregivers

<http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/caregivers-resources/grp-checklists-forms.aspx>

Information and Resources for Caregivers

<http://www.ncoa.org/get-involved/i-am-older-adult-caregiver.html>

National Caregivers Library

<http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/home.aspx>

National Caregivers Support Program

[http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aoa\\_programs/hcltc/caregiver/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aoa_programs/hcltc/caregiver/index.aspx)

Caregiver Resources from Medicare

<http://www.medicare.gov/caregivers/caregiver-topics-support.html>

Caregiver Resources from Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/caregivers.html>

Programs that Help You Pay for Medical Expenses

<http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11445.pdf>

Benefits for People with Disabilities

<https://www.disability.gov/benefits>

Government Benefits-Check Your Eligibility

[http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-finder#benefits&qc=cat\\_1](http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-finder#benefits&qc=cat_1)

Caregiver Resource Network

<http://www.caregiverresource.net/>

## Final Thoughts

Robert Louis Stevens was quoted as saying, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant.” As a caregiver you will plant many seeds every day and some will grow quickly while others will grow slower. Know that the love and care you are providing your loved one is immeasurable and invaluable. You are a precious commodity and one that makes the life of your loved one so much better.



There will be obstacles that you will need to overcome, possibly you will be faced with them daily, weekly or even monthly. These cannot be avoided. Look at these as challenges and do not fear them. You cannot control the situation you have been placed into nor should you. By controlling everything you will miss so many special moments because your energy will be going in directions it need not be.

Allow yourself to feel and experience this role on a daily basis. If one day you are finding it difficult to be a caregiver, know tomorrow is a new day. Go to bed, forgiving yourself and wake up the next day celebrating the fact that you have a new day that filled with new possibilities.

Remember to laugh EVERY day! Laughter is so critical to the caregiving process, as odd as that may sound right now. You may ask, “What is possibly funny about sickness, all of this upheaval and all of the changes my life is facing?” Well, that is the part you will need to search for.

Look for laughter in your routine, your tasks and your life. Find reasons to smile and to be thankful for. This healthy and positive attitude will keep your mind and spirit stronger and in turn you will be a better caregiver.

Life is a long journey and what you are facing today is only part of that incredible experience. Embrace your role, make a pact with yourself to learn everything you can about it and in the end, enjoy your successes and understand and accept your failures.

Being frustrated, angry, resentful and negative, takes so much energy and you won't have that much extra to give to these types of emotion. When you are happy you will feel more energy, more focused and more in control.

The Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter is here for you as you so lovingly care for your loved one.

We want you to know you are not alone!

If you need someone to talk to, or resources, pick up the telephone and call our office. If we are not in the office, leave a message and someone will return your call.

Calling is the first step to knowing you need help and you have the desire to seek assistance in your role as a caregiver. It means you want the best for yourself and for your loved one.

You can reach a caring professional at the Michigan Chapter by calling: (800) 716-6554 or at the National Office by calling: (978) 463-5843.

Wishing You the Best in Your Role as a Caregiver,  
The Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter

