

## ***The Importance of Caring for the Caregiver***

Advocacy is a word commonly used in the health care field which means speaking out for others' rights. Many times caregivers are patient advocates. They make every effort to help patients get what they need, from scheduling appointments, to assisting with medications, to helping with meals. Caregivers may also provide emotional support to the patient going through cancer as well as family members.

Caregivers, however, sometimes forget to practice self-advocacy. The caregivers' needs may not always be met. When caregivers are asked why they are not addressing their needs, the answer is many times, "I'm not the one with cancer."

The National Family Caregivers Association offers suggestions as to how caregivers can better advocate for themselves. Some things are beyond the control of a caregiver. There are, however, choices caregivers can make to improve their emotional and physical health.

### ***Know Yourself***

- It is very important to be aware of your strengths and limitations.
- Establish clear boundaries as to what you can and cannot do.
- Learn to say "no" and when to ask for help.

### ***Be Proactive – Make Good Choices***

- Once you recognize your strengths and limitations, ***choose to communicate*** these in a way that is clear to others.
- Take charge of your own well-being. ***Choose to care*** about your health, both emotionally and physically.
- ***Choose to plan*** for the future by addressing the need for a legal decision maker if needed. Advanced planning avoids the need to make critical decisions in a crisis situation.

### ***Gather information***

- As a caregiver, you are often an extra set of eyes and ears for the patient. ***Choose to learn.*** The more information you have, the more confident you will be in your caregiver role.
- If you need help practicing self-advocacy, ***choose to ask for help*** from the social worker for your team. Participate in the Caregiver Connection offered through Moffitt to hear how other caregivers navigate the difficult cancer journey. Call (813) 745-8407 for additional information about the Family and Friends Support Group.



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