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# CAREGIVER CONNECTION

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April 2025

## Feeling Alone? It's More Common Than You Think

*Reprinted from Trualta*

### "I feel alone."

This is a phrase Beth-Anne thinks often ever since her husband, Charlie, was diagnosed with dementia 3 years ago. At first, friends and family were incredibly supportive. But as Charlie's dementia progressed, their friends drifted away. Their children check in regularly, but Beth-Anne feels their lives are busy and doesn't want to bother them. Although Beth-Anne enjoys being active and social, she rarely has the opportunity or energy now that her husband requires more care. Charlie can no longer hold a conversation and is frequently hostile toward her, which further increases her feelings of isolation and loneliness.

### You're Not Alone in Feeling Alone

Beth-Anne is not unique in feeling this way, and neither are you. 20-30% of caregivers report feeling alone, too. Loneliness is a normal emotion that affects each person differently. Some people describe feeling sad, empty, or disconnected from the world, no matter what they do. Others withdraw, self-isolate, and neglect important self-care.

Regardless of how loneliness appears in your life, it likely causes emotional pain and can have other profound impacts. Feeling alone for long periods is linked to high blood pressure, insomnia, and depression. These health issues magnify the stress of caregiving. Fortunately, there are ways to address the feeling and find relief.

### Why We Feel Alone

Let's look at why caregivers may feel alone in their situation. Commonly reported reasons for loneliness are:

- » **Increased responsibilities.** Caregiving means taking responsibility for yourself and your care recipient. These duties often increase over time and can feel never-ending.
- » **Changed relationships.** You may feel that roles are being reversed or power is being shifted between you and your care recipient. This may make you feel sad or uncomfortable and more alone.
- » **Lack of support.** When caregivers find themselves solely responsible for the welfare of their care recipient, everything can feel more overwhelming.
- » **Feeling unrecognized.** It's not uncommon for caregivers to report feeling they're taken for granted by their care recipient, as well as friends or family who don't understand how taxing and frustrating the job can be.
- » **Anticipatory grief.** If you're caring for an older adult or someone with a terminal illness, you may find yourself grieving their loss before it happens. You may also miss the person they used to be and the relationship you used to have with them and grieve that loss as well

## Getting Out of Our Loneliness

Once you've identified some of the causes of your loneliness, it's time to make a plan to feel better. Finding what works for you may take a while, but don't give up. Start with these strategies that helped Beth-Anne and can also help you:

- » [Reach out for help](#). Contact your care recipient's healthcare providers or your local Area Agency on Aging about services that can help take some of the load off you.
- » [Find a support group](#). Caregiver support groups are an excellent way to socialize with people who can relate to your situation. If you find it difficult to leave the house, an online group might work for you.
- » [Find new ways to spend time with your care recipient](#). Even if your care recipient doesn't participate in activities in the same way that they used to, find a new activity that is meaningful to both of you and engage in it together. Some examples are listening to music, taking a walk together, or looking at a photo album together.
- » [Join an online community](#). Whatever your interest or hobby, there's likely an online community for you. Talking to others with similar interests helps break up long days and ease loneliness.
- » [Spend time outside the house](#). Even if it's just a few minutes a day, spending time outside can make a big difference in your day.
- » [Turn your alone time into quality time](#). It might seem counterintuitive, but spending time with yourself can help alleviate loneliness. Use your alone time to engage in a hobby or pamper yourself.
- » [Pick up the phone](#). Call a friend or family member to say hello. Even a short conversation can help you feel less alone.
- » [Don't be afraid to get professional help](#). If these strategies don't help or you think your problem is more than normal loneliness, talk to your healthcare provider.

Here are some links you might find helpful

- » AARP Family Caregiving <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/>
- » Area Agency on Aging Locator [https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/about/Aging\\_Network/AAA.aspx](https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/about/Aging_Network/AAA.aspx)
- » 22 Best Caregiver Support Groups: Online and In-Person <https://www.aplaceforhome.com/caregiver-resources/articles/caregiver-support-groups>

## Upcoming Caregiver Events

**Creating an Emergency Plan** April 1, 2025 1 PM to 2:30 PM at the Holmen Area Community Center

**Men's Shed** April 15, 2025, 1:30-3 PM at Bog's Edge Brewery 3511 Blarney Rd. Warrens

**Powerful Tools for Caregivers** April 17 to May 14, 2025, 10:30 AM to 12 noon at Harry J. Olson Senior Center

**Benefits 101** May 6, 2025, 1PM to 2:30 PM at the Holmen Area Community Center

**Men's Shed** May 27, 2025, 1:30-3 PM at Tomah Senior Center



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