

The following questionnaire, known as the Zarit Burden Interview, was first developed in the 1980s to help caregivers and mental health professionals evaluate caregiver stress and burnout. While professional psychologists and therapists use this tool to assess clients who are providing care for loved ones, family caregivers who are concerned about their own welfare can use this quick quiz to receive a reliable and objective calculation of the level of strain they are experiencing.

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions as honestly as possible in order to receive the most accurate assessment of your caregiver burden. Use the following scale to choose a number that best describes how you feel about each question.



QUESTION	SCORE
1) Do you feel that your loved one asks for more help than they need?	0 1 2 3 4
2) Do you feel that, because of the time you spend with your loved one, you don't have enough time for yourself?	0 1 2 3 4
3) Do you feel stressed between caring for your loved one and trying to meet other responsibilities for your family or work?	0 1 2 3 4
4) Do you feel embarrassed about your loved one's behavior?	0 1 2 3 4
5) Do you feel angry when you are around your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
6) Do you feel that your loved one affects your relationships with other family members or friends in a negative way?	0 1 2 3 4
7) Are you afraid of what the future holds for your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
8) Do you feel your loved one is dependent on you?	0 1 2 3 4
9) Do you feel strained when you are around your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
10) Do you feel your health has suffered because of your involvement with your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4

11) Do you feel that you don't have as much privacy as you would like because of your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
12) Do you feel that your social life has suffered because you are caring for your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
13) Do you feel uncomfortable about having friends to your home because of your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
14) Do you feel that your loved one seems to expect you to take care of them as if you were the only one they could depend on?	0 1 2 3 4
15) Do you feel that you do not have enough money to take care of your loved one in addition to your other expenses?	0 1 2 3 4
16) Do you feel that you will be unable to take care of your relative much longer?	0 1 2 3 4
17) Do you feel you have lost control of your life since your relative became ill?	0 1 2 3 4
18) Do you wish you could leave the care of your loved one to someone else?	0 1 2 3 4
19) Do you feel uncertain about what to do about your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
20) Do you feel you should be doing more for your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
21) Do you feel that you could do a better job of caring for your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
22) Overall, how burdened do you feel in caring for your loved one?	0 1 2 3 4
	<b>TOTAL:</b>

**Scoring:** After answering all 22 questions above, add up the numbers that correspond to your answers. Compare your total number to the scale on the following pages to receive an interpretation of your caregiver burden. On the last page of this assessment, you will find tips, resources and next steps that will help you reduce your burden and see that your loved one receives the care they need.

### Your Results

#### **0 – 20: Little to No Burden**

Your final score indicates a fairly low and perfectly acceptable level of burden. However, since caring for a loved one is often a long-term commitment, it is crucial for you to stay in tune with your emotions and regularly reassess your stress levels.

Burnout can easily sneak up on family caregivers who are focused on and dedicated to providing care. Learn to be extremely honest with yourself. Recognize your limits early on, get comfortable with acknowledging when you are approaching or have exceeded them, and have a plan in place for these scenarios (because they WILL happen).

While you may think that attending a support group or hiring in-home care for a few hours each week might be excessive at this point, these steps can provide you with a solid foundation for your efforts that can be adapted and increased as your loved one's needs evolve. These supports will enable you to make rational and confident decisions for your loved one and yourself throughout the entire caregiving process.

#### **21 – 40: Mild to Moderate Burden**

Moderate caregiver burden sounds like a harmless, normal level of stress, but this particular stage can be the tipping point for many family caregivers. You are already face to face with the difficult realities of your caregiving role. You may not have reached your limits yet, but you are certainly experiencing some stress and strain, even if it is intermittent.

This is an excellent time to assess your care plan and take a realistic look at how much longer you anticipate providing care for your loved one. This is not meant to be callous advice, but conditions like dementia, Parkinson's, and heart and lung disease can worsen over the course of many years. Do you want to continue providing hands-on care for that length of time? Will you be physically, mentally, and financially able to do so? Have you discussed home care services or other long-term care options with your loved one?

Broaching these subjects early on will help ensure that you both are on the same page when it comes to valuing one another's emotional and physical wellbeing. It also gives you ample time to make financial and legal arrangements that are conducive to your plan of care as it evolves.

### **41 – 60: Moderate to Severe Burden**

As your loved one ages and their health conditions progress, things like growing daily responsibilities, financial strain and sleep deprivation begin to add up and have more serious, longer-lasting effects on YOU. Whether you are experiencing a marked change in mood, frequent colds, or the inability to simply focus and think straight, heed the physical and mental warning signs that your body is giving you. You are trying to do too much.

If you still have not felt a compelling need for respite or a support group, take the initiative to seek these things out now. Many caregivers take pride in their work because they do it out of love. The desire to save money is also a common reason for keeping hands-on care within the family. However, by the time most family caregivers ask for assistance, damage has already been done to their health, psyche, relationships and other aspects of their lives.

Make yourself a priority and part of your loved one's care plan in order to avoid these unnecessary complications. It has been proven that the mental and physical stress caregivers endure increase their risk of developing chronic medical conditions and even death. If you were to be hospitalized tomorrow or pass away suddenly, who would care for your loved one?

### **61 – 88: Severe Burden**

You are profoundly burnt out. At this point, your welfare and that of your loved one are at serious risk. Even if you have performed your duties with the best of intentions, you have pushed your limits way too far—and not in a good way.

It is likely that you have reached this point because you haven't heeded your body's warnings or sought out assistance that you truly need. If you haven't already arranged for alternative sources of care, attended a support group, or spoken with your physician about your mental and physical health, NOW is the time to do so. Letting this go unchecked may result in compassion fatigue, depression and anxiety, heart attack or stroke, and even neglect of your loved one.

Caregivers experiencing burnout are incapable of providing adequate physical and emotional care. While you may have promised your loved one that you will be the sole person to care for them no matter what, even temporary respite through a home care agency, an assisted living facility or a nursing home would be a better option for both of you while long-term decisions are made. It may sound backwards, but the top priority right now is YOU. Until balance and wellness are reinstated in your life, your loved one must accept care from someone or somewhere else.

## Resources and Intervention Options

A 2013 study published in the Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences concluded that there are four main aspects to “unburdening” a caregiver: information, professional assistance, healthy communication, and public/financial programs. Below we have curated a list of informational and supportive resources in each of these four categories that every caregiver should consider, regardless of their burden level.

### 1. Information and Training Materials

- [Care Plan 101: Set Yourself Up for Success as a Caregiver](#)
- [Strategies for Getting \(and Staying\) Organized While Caregiving](#)
- [Why Caregivers Refuse Help](#)
- [Relaxing: Why It’s Hard and How Caregivers Can Learn to Unwind](#)
- [Sick with Worry: How Thoughts Affect Your Health](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue: When Caregivers Go Beyond Burnout](#)
- [Getting Caregiver Support When You Have No Time](#)

### 2. Professional Support

- [The Importance of Counseling for Caregiver Burnout](#)
- [Is a Geriatric Care Manager Right for Your Family?](#)
- [Where to Find Respite: Resources for Caregivers](#)
- [3 Types of Adult Day Care](#)
- [Kinds of Home Care Available for an Elderly Parent](#)
- [Choosing Senior Housing Care Based on Your Parent's Needs](#)
- [Understanding Long-Term Care Options and Finding Providers](#)

### 3. Effective Communication

- [Apologizing After Caregiver Stress Causes a Blowup](#)
- [Getting Your Siblings to Help With Caregiving](#)
- [11 Ways to Keep Your Relationship Healthy](#)
- [Family Meetings: How to Have Peace and Avoid Arguments](#)
- [How to Discuss Money with Your Parents](#)
- [6 Ways to Prepare for "The Talk" About Moving to Senior Living](#)

### 4. Public and Financial Support

- [Hidden Money: Overlooked Funds Could Pay for Long-Term Care](#)
- [VA Aid and Attendance: The Basics](#)
- [19 Free Services for Seniors or Their Caregivers](#)
- [When to Begin Applying for Medicaid](#)
- [Long-Term Care Insurance: How To Use a Policy and File a Claim](#)
- [How to Use a Life Insurance Policy to Pay for Long-Term Care](#)
- [Find Your Local Area Agency on Aging](#)