



MORE ABOUT MS
WORKSHOP HANDOUT

HOW TO THRIVE AND SURVIVE AS A SUPPORT PARTNER

WE KNOW THAT SUPPORT PARTNERS...

- Want to provide the best support they can for the person they love
- Gain satisfaction from their supporting role, while also feeling drained or overwhelmed at times
- Are often unsure how to best help and support the person with MS
- Are seldom asked how they're doing – and so keep it to themselves
- Are likely to neglect their own health and wellness due to lack of time and energy
- Are at increased risk of depression and unhealthy behaviors



MS IS A “WE DISEASE,” NOT A “ME DISEASE” – YOU ARE LIVING WITH IT TOO –

Support partners need to “put on their own oxygen mask before assisting the person they love.”

- Deal with your own feelings of grief, loss, anxiety, resentment, guilt
- Take time and space for yourself
- Ask for help when you need it

Your partner's mood and cognitive symptoms can be even more confusing and challenging to understand than physical symptoms.

Support for the support partner as well as the person with MS is the key to restoring and maintaining effective, balanced, and satisfying relationships.



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Planning for the worst while hoping for the best is the best way to deal with the unpredictability of MS.

Communication and shared problem-solving are key – and mental health providers can help you jumpstart difficult conversations.

RECOGNIZE THE COMMON SIGNS OF "BURN-OUT"

Physical: Feeling drained and tired most of the time; feeling sick a lot; frequent headaches, muscle aches, pain; changes in appetite or sleep habits

Emotional: Sense of failure; feeling helpless, trapped, defeated; feeling alone; loss of motivation, increasingly negative outlook; decreased sense of accomplishment

Behavioral: withdrawing; isolating oneself; procrastinating; using drugs or alcohol to cope; taking frustrations out on others; skipping work

KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO

Attend a Can Do MS program for support partners; consult a mental health professional; call the National MS Society (1-800-344-4867) for support; ask family and friends for help and support

