# Chapter 41 Caregivers and Stress

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# Abstract

Family care of a person with chronic physical or mental health problems is an increasingly common, and often stressful situation. Caregivers in intensive care situations, such as assisting a relative with dementia, often experience high levels of emotional distress and are at increased risk of illness. Stress models describe an unfolding process whereby illness-related stressors and caregivers' subjective experience of them can spill over to affect work, family relationships, and other areas of the caregiver's life. These stressors in turn affect critical physiological processes, health, and well-being. Skill-building interventions that improve caregivers' abilities in managing stressors show considerable promise in lowering subjective stress and improving well-being. Respite interventions, such as adult day services lower stressor exposure and lead to better regulation of stress responses at biological and psychological levels.