



**STONEBAY**  
*of Orono*

SENIOR LIVING

## CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Being responsible for the health and wellness of a senior loved one can be both rewarding and taxing. Finding a group of peers who can relate and sympathize to these complex emotions is one of the best ways to cope with the challenges of this role.

The good news is there are a wide variety of caregiver support groups, both online and in-person, that you can participate in. Let's first discuss the benefits of joining one of these groups.

### **BENEFITS OF CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS**

Some caregivers prefer to find a group that is disease-specific, such as a support group for caregivers of dementia patients. Others might find it more beneficial to engage in a support group for caregivers of elderly parents or a support group for caregivers of spouses.

There are many options for connecting with your peers, whether it is by attending an in-person meeting in your own neighborhood or by connecting with an online caregiver support group or forum. What these support groups all have in common are the benefits they provide to family caregivers.

- **Relatable struggles:** Caregiver support groups give members an opportunity to share their innermost feelings with those who are experiencing similar struggles. And those feelings can be complicated. Family caregivers often struggle with fear, guilt, anger, sadness, anxiety, and more. Sharing with people who can relate to their unique situation may provide a weary caregiver with the emotional support they are often missing.
- **Insight and advice:** Another benefit of a support group is the opportunity to gain the insight of people who may have already navigated their way through some of your current challenges. They can offer advice and solutions you may not have considered.

## Benefits unique to online caregiver support groups include the following:

- **Flexibility:** One challenge most caregivers share is a lack of time. Most feel as if there are never enough hours in the day. The flexibility of online support groups gives caregivers an opportunity to connect at whatever time their schedule allows. It might be at midnight after the kids are tucked into bed or during a quick lunch break at your desk at work.
- **Anonymity:** The anonymous nature of an online support group often makes it easier for family caregivers to talk openly and honestly about their feelings and struggles. For example, if a family caregiver is mad at their siblings for not pitching in to help, an online support group can provide a non-judgmental forum for expressing that anger. An Alzheimer's caregiver struggling with guilt and resentment about sacrificing their own social life to care for their loved one will no doubt find others who feel the same way in an online forum.

As a busy family caregiver, how can you find a caregiver support group you are comfortable with?

We have a few avenues you can explore.

### Caregiver Support Groups

- **Stonebay Senior Living:** Check with Stonebay Senior Living to see when they have caregiver support groups planned for the month!
- **Local Agency on Aging:** If an in-person support group sounds like the best fit for you, your local agency on aging can be a good resource for helping you make the connection. They typically know which senior living communities, churches, and other organizations host caregiver support group meetings and when they are held.
- **Family Caregiver Alliance:** This organization has a resource called Caregiver Connect that you can visit online. It helps caregivers connect with peers online.
- **ALZConnected:** Dedicated to supporting the unique needs of family caregivers who have a loved one with dementia, this online Alzheimer's support resource was created by the Alzheimer's Association.

*We hope these resources assist you in finding a caregiver support group that tackles the topics and challenges you are facing!*