

When a Family Member Becomes Ill

The long term serious illness of a family member can be challenging for all those around them. Some family or friends may behave in ways that surprise you- perhaps by stepping forward and giving support you would never thought them capable of, or sadly by shutting down and seeming unable to give the support you thought you had a right to expect.

Most of us can summon up the resources to help someone through a crisis, but some serious illnesses can absorb all a family's energies for months or occasionally even for years. If you are the sick person's main caregiver it is natural for you to decide to put your own needs on hold until the crisis is over. But do bear in mind that this may turn into a marathon. How can you best use your energies so that you do not end up worn out, and thus unable to provide support?

These can be sensitive times, and you may feel the need to keep some parts of your life feeling as normal as possible. Thus there is often the urge to down-play the seriousness of your situation when talking to work colleagues.

If you feel comfortable doing so, it is usually wise to talk confidentially to your manager, who is then forewarned should things suddenly take a turn for the worse and will be ready to give what support he/she can should the stresses of the home situation begin to show at work.



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