

Caring for combative elders risks poorer health

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Tending to older loved ones who have bold personalities may be harmful to their caregivers' physical health, report Cornell researchers.

People who cared for individuals characterized as "easygoing" and "well-intentioned" reported better physical health than those who cared for headstrong and less agreeable people. No effects, however, were found regarding the caregivers' mental health.

The study of 312 pairs of caregivers and care receivers, which is one of the first to look at the influence of care-receiver personality on caregiver health, was published online Dec. 11 in the *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: [Psychological Sciences](#) and Social Sciences*.

Caregiver health was particularly low when those receiving care were both low in [agreeableness](#) and highly extraverted—a combination called a "leader type," said senior author Corinna Loeckenhoff, assistant professor of human development in the College of [Human Ecology](#). "That kind of personality may be very successful in a business setting, but it's not if you're receiving care," Loeckenhoff said.

The findings have implications for the millions of Americans who provide informal eldercare. In 2011, 16 percent of the U.S. population over age 15—and nearly 25 percent of those between 45 and 64 years of age—provided some eldercare, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

"The care recipient's personality is just as important a factor for caregiver health as chronic pain and [physical impairment](#)," said lead author Catherine Riffin, a graduate student in the field of human development. "Clinical evaluations of caregiving settings should take this into account."

More information: [psychsocgerontology.oxfordjour ... 5c-a57a-aa838e53b15e](https://psychsocgerontology.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1093/psycger/53.5.557)

Provided by Cornell University

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