

Top Ten Tips for Caregivers

1. Take care of your own health. That means both your physical and emotional health.
 - Schedule your own recommended doctor's visits and health screenings.
 - Examine how you can fit a 30-minute exercise break into your day. Do your best to eat a balanced diet.
 - Make sure you are getting adequate sleep.
 - Recognize the signs of depression and talk with your health care professional if you are experiencing them.
2. Enlist the help of others. Caregiving should be a team effort.
 - Family and friends may want to help but often are uncertain what to offer. Keep a list of chores and errands handy so you will have something specific for them to help with.
 - Explore what community resources and services are available to assist you with your care giving. Don't think you have to go it alone and do it all your self.
3. Plan for what-ifs. Take one day at a time, but prepare for the future.
 - Consider who would provide care for your loved one should you be unable to.
 - Have the alternate caregiver(s) spend time with your relative. It will give you a break and make it easier for everyone should you need his or her help on short notice.
4. Keep your expectations realistic.
 - Be realistic about your abilities and how much you can do.
 - Recognize which problems you can do something about and which are beyond anyone's control; focus on the former.
 - Be realistic about the abilities of the person you are caring for.
 - Enjoy the memories but realize their current needs and that relationships are changing.
Recognize that there are many rewards to be had.
5. Take time for yourself.
 - Arrange regular time to take a break from your care giving responsibilities. Also called respite, every caregiver needs more of this than they realize or admit.
 - Talk with family, friends, church, and social service groups to set up regular respite care.
 - Consider home care services and adult daycare.
 - Remember, it's important to keep up your own interests and activities as much as possible
6. Seek Support.
 - It may be through a support group, perhaps a phone call to the Caregiver Helpline (982-1090) or an afternoon spent with another caregiver.

- Having others to turn to who appreciate the challenges you face can be a great source of strength and comfort.
7. Acknowledge your feelings.
 - You may have times when you feel angry, frustrated, anxious, and even resentful. These are common feelings among caregivers. Don't try to ignore them: develop strategies to help you deal with them.
 - Talk with others (friends, counselors, a support group), write your thoughts and feelings in a journal, develop an exercise routine, and learn some relaxation techniques.
 - Look at your care giving situation closely. Do you have help and time for yourself?
 - Being well informed about your loved one's illness or disability and comfortable with specific tasks related to his care promotes confidence and decreases anxiety.
 8. Ask questions of health care providers.
 - Participate in educational programs related to care giving issues whenever possible.
 - Give yourself some credit. You may feel you are not doing enough for you loved one or not doing a good job.
 9. Be forgiving of your own limitations and mistakes.
 - Remind yourself daily of all that you do and the difference you are making in you relative's life.
 - Pat yourself on the back frequently.
 10. Laugh! Do this often and loudly. It is free; good for you health and something you can share with your loved one.