



Help for the Caregiver

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Here are some suggestions in providing the best care to your loved one while also taking care of yourself.

- Hold regular discussions with your loved one about their preferences as they age.
 - Learn as much as you can about your loved one's condition.
 - Speak to with the doctor about the diagnosis.
 - Research on your own via the Internet
 - Contact local agencies such as Area Agency on Aging or Alzheimer's Association.
 - Hold a family meeting even with those out of the area to discuss how all of you will provide or coordinate care for your loved one.
 - Complete an inventory of important papers and records.
 - Make a list of your loved one's medical information including doctors, hospitals, past health conditions and current medications.
 - Make a list of emergency contact information and distribute to family and friends.
 - Investigate housing options available in your community.
 - Start a journal to express your feelings and thoughts.
- Learn about how to correctly care for your loved one including lifting, transferring, or skin care.

- Accept and seek help so you can get some time off by finding resources among friends and the community. Consider hiring a professional caregiver to provide assistance with cooking, cleaning, companionship, or any other activities of daily living.
- Make a list of how people could help.
- Make a list of people who can give support to you and your loved one.
- Take care of yourself , make your health a priority too.
- Set aside time for yourself everyday to do something you enjoy or that relaxes you.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Talk about your feelings by attending a support group, talking to a friend or seeking counseling.
- Assess your own limits emotionally, financially, physically and spiritually. This will help identify when you need help.
- Don't give in to the guilt you may be feeling, by taking care of yourself you are best prepared for caring for your loved one.

Tips for Finding a Support Group

You can find support groups through a number of resources. Here are some suggestions for finding the right one for you:

- Ask friends and family members with experience providing care to a loved one or friend if they can recommend any groups.
 - Check with local religious organizations or agencies to find what is available for your particular situation.
 - Check with the local chapters of disease-specific organizations.
 - Contact the local Area Agency on Aging.
 - Contact your community's senior center.
 - Contact home health agencies in your area.
 - Check with a local marriage and family therapist or psychologist's office.
- Talk to the social service or social workers at a local hospital.

- Check the time and frequency the group meets and make sure it is convenient to you. You will need to make time in your schedule to attend regularly.
Visit a few groups to find one that you like. Each may follow its own format. At the very least, find one that:
 - Provides a safe and inviting environment
 - Respects confidentiality
 - Is run by experienced professionals and supportive peers
 - Occasionally offers guest speakers and professionals
- If you can't find a group you like, start one yourself or consider online support services.

Talking With Your Supervisor

Use this checklist to prepare for your discussion with your supervisor about balancing your work and caregiving duties. Complete the following prior to the conversation.

- Familiarize yourself with your human resources employee handbook or website. Find out what programs may be available to help you with caregiving.
- Learn about the Family and Medical Leave Act and if you may qualify.
Find out if your state offers paid leave beyond the federal program and whether you're eligible. The department overseeing the program varies by state. In California, for example, it's managed by the Employee Development Department.
- Look into programs available in your community. Your local Area Agency on Aging is a good place to start. You can find it through www.agis.com/listing. Also try looking in the phone book under "Senior."
- Research other local services providers for additional programs and services to support your needs. Use our Find Facilities & Services feature to do this: www.agis.com/Find-Facilities-and-Services.
- If you belong to a union, find out what benefits or programs it offers to assist with caregiving.
- Make a list of your concerns and how your work might be affected.
Identify the different options for fulfilling your work duties (such as telecommuting a few days a week, working alternate hours, and so on), and come to the meeting with a written recommendation.
- Don't broach the subject of caregiving during a stressful time at work. Wait until you and your supervisor can meet and discuss things calmly and rationally.

- Keep in mind that the conversation may not go as well as you planned. You may need to meet more than once to determine the best course of action for all parties.
- Offer a trial run. Suggest implementing a plan for several weeks or months for both of you to try out the new arrangement.
- Once you've both agreed to a plan, document the agreement and send to your supervisor.
- If your caregiving situation changes, revisit with your manager so he or she can make any adjustments to get the work done.