
Strategies for Finding the Help You Need

“The hardest part of caregiving for me was the day-to-day routine. It got boring and, over time, my days became a blur. After a while, I felt getting help wasn’t an option – at least I thought it wasn’t an option for me.”



The fact is: we have choices. We may not be able to cure our loved-one of their illness or disability, but we can seek to create a caregiving routine that will support the quality of life for both our loved-ones and ourselves.

One caregiver described his caregiver experiences as a list of his “yes-es”

- Yes, for many tasks, it is easier to just do it by myself.
- Yes, some of the most distasteful jobs fall on me.
- Yes, there seems to be little support to help with tasks and even fewer people who are interested in my daily grid of activities.
- Yes, the isolation can be unbearable at times.
- Yes, even when I find someone to help out, I still must “train” the helper on how things should “best” be done.
- Yes, the whole “educating the helpers” routine gets tiring and I feel it is just easier to do it all myself.
- Yes I am trying to be a caregiver in addition to the other responsibilities I have – work, family, etc.
- Yes, I choose to provide the best care possible for my loved-one.
- And, yes, finding help may be best for both of us.

Getting started.

A couple of questions to ask yourself:

- Can I, and am I willing, to invite someone to help?
- Generally, how receptive is my loved-one to receiving help from others?
- What are the most important things that these people need to know...about me and my loved-one?
- What are some things that I and/or my loved-one can allow others to do? Cleaning... Mowing the lawn... Cooking... Personal care... Small household jobs?

You are in the driver’s seat.



As an alternative to developing a detailed care plan (suggested on pages 12-16) consider writing down all the things you, as a caregiver, do daily: for example, make breakfast, help with shower, shopping, change light bulb in the hallway, replace the carpet tape in the living room, do the laundry, clean the tub...and the list will go on. When you have written these things down for a couple of days, you will have a good idea of what you do as a caregiver.

And, while you are at it, you may want to toss in a few things you personally need done...for example, pick up the dry cleaning, get the oil changed in the car, etc. Once you have a list, it will be easier to say to someone else “Yes, you can help”.

“You know, there is something you can do that would be really helpful.”

A million dollar piece of advice: keep a copy of the list by the phone and in your pocket. Should family or friends ask how they can help out, you are prepared to tell them in practical terms. After all, it’s what THEY want to hear....the practical stuff...it’s something they can take on, complete and feel good about. Having others take care of the simplest, most mundane task can provide big-time relief.

Help can be found in traditional caregiving-oriented businesses and organizations.

Often, this is first place caregivers look. Some examples include: companion or friendly visitor, telephone reassurance, in-home medical alert, chore services, home-health aid, home-delivered meals, transportation services, adult day center, home health nurse.

Help can also be found in non-caregiving venues as well...

One huge insight shared by a caregiver was: “When looking for help, consider looking in the “non-caregiving” business community. I found better support, price and assistance.”



For example:

- Cleaning – Call local college for a student or look for a housekeeping company (this can save you \$)
- Mowing the lawn – Ask your neighbor or local community organization
- Cooking – Personal chefs (don’t laugh they can have pretty good deals)
- Personal care – Friend or relative
- Taking care of personal isolation: – Have a friend over just for you (and don’t worry about cleaning your house!)
- Small household jobs – Contact a local church, youth service organization (boy scouts, girls scouts, etc.) or small construction company
- Shopping – Grocery stores deliver, or this is a great job for a relative or friend

Many family caregivers have said that sharing caregiving responsibilities makes an enormous difference on both a practical and emotional level. Consider letting others help with your caregiving.

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