



Share the Care: Involve the Whole Family in Caregiving

1. **Become a Knowledgeable Caregiver: Gather up the necessary tools**
 - a. Prepare yourself with the facts
 - b. Seek professional help
 - c. Have a vision in mind- What are your objectives?

2. **Provide patient-centered care**
 - a. Establish goals, focusing on the needs of the care receiver
 - b. If they are able to remain involved, keep them involved

3. **Involve other family members and friends**
 - a. Ask for Help
 - i. Identify SPECIFIC tasks that others can fulfill (e.g., household repairs, grocery shopping, cooking, paying bills, grooming, pet care, medication management)
 - ii. Share your list with family members and friends
 - iii. Give everyone a job
 1. Get creative- especially when it comes to long distance family members
 2. Make the necessary changes needed in order for others to help
 - b. Accept Help
 - i. Be prepared to share your list
 - ii. The more you practice accepting help, the easier it will become

4. **Involve close friends, neighbors, and service providers**
 - a. Tie up all loose ends
 - b. Have a back-up plan
 - i. Access your community resources for volunteers
 - ii. Develop a communication strategy for cancellations

Manage a Family Meeting

1. The best time to communicate with other family members is BEFORE a crisis.
2. Involve all the key players.
3. Develop an agenda: What is the goal? Why are you meeting?
4. Meet in a neutral location that is comfortable and convenient.
5. Identify a facilitator; one who can remain neutral and has good communication skills.
6. Take turns being a talker and a listener.
7. Share suggestions without criticizing.
8. Balance out the pros and cons of each option.
9. Share the care. Make sure that each person understands what they have agreed to do.
10. End with a summary. If a goal was not reached, schedule a time to revisit the issue.

Preventing and Responding to Challenging Situations

1. You can't always be the problem solver or the "fixer."
2. Focus on one or two goals at a time. More than that can become overwhelming.
3. Understand that you can't fix the family issues of the past, but you can move past them in order to help your loved one.
4. Think before you speak. –Take a minute, if necessary, to process your next phrase.
5. If you are going to criticize a suggestion, be prepared to be a part of the solution.
6. Agree to disagree, without being disagreeable.
7. Obtain the help of an objective outside party if needed.
8. Keep in mind that it may take more than one conversation to reach a solution.
9. Meet regularly to plan ahead and respond to issues that arise as you proceed.
10. Remember to B-R-E-A-T-H-E

Tips on How to Handle Familial Relationships

1. **Don't expect anything.**
This does not mean that it's wrong to ask a brother, sister, or other relative for help. It's simply a matter of perspective. Don't expect and you won't be disappointed.
2. **Help yourself by reinforcing positive behavior in others.**
Say: "I'm so glad you visited Mom the other day. Your visit really calmed her."
Instead of: "So you FINALLY visited Mom the other day! It's about time!"
3. **Be very clear about what you're able to do and not do.**
Understand your limitations. Set your boundaries. Share these with others involved in the care.
4. **Be open and honest.**
Be honest with your needs, requests, and limitations.
5. **Be responsible.**
If you say you are going to do something, do it. If others see that you are following through on what you say, they will be more likely to do the same. By following through on your responsibilities, you will let others know that they can count on you and vice versa.
6. **Be forgiving.**
We don't all share the same limitations or views on caregiving. Some people can handle 24/7 care, others can't. Some can handle grief and loss better than others. Learn to be ok with each others' differences. You will continue being family through this experience; allow it to make your relationships stronger.

Take Care of You

I have the right to take care of myself.

This is not an act of selfishness.

It will enable me to take better care of my loved one.

1) Increase your Knowledge

The more you understand about your caregiving situation, your loved one's condition, and your options, the better able you will be to respond successfully.

- What is the diagnosis? Treatment options? Proper care? Progression? Medications?
- What involvement will other family members have? Care receiver?
- What is the care receiver's financial situation? Yours?
- What are the needs of the care receiver? His/her preferences?
- What are the needs of the caregiver?

-Seek Professional Help

- Support Groups: Provide you with a safe space to share feelings in a non-judgmental environment, a social outlet where you can meet others who understand your situation, and learn about reliable products, services, and coping mechanisms.
- Counseling: Provide you with emotional support, skill development, and helpful strategies to improve your coping mechanisms.
- Case Management/Family Consultations: Professional staff, knowledgeable in services for seniors and caregivers, can help you alleviate stress, examine options, and help make decisions related to the care of your loved one.

2) Accept that there are things you CANNOT change and work on those you CAN.

You cannot change the condition or the way in which your loved one reacts to his or her condition, but you CAN change the way in which you RESPOND to the condition.

You CAN definitely help yourself by:

- a) Seeking professional support to help manage caregiving duties and stress.
- b) Talking to someone you can trust about your feelings and frustrations.
- c) Being realistic about your loved one's condition, while letting go of expectations.
- d) Improving your communication skills with the care receiver and those around you.
- e) Developing new and healthy coping mechanisms.
- f) Seeking and using respite options.
- g) Setting time aside for you.
- h) Attending a support group.

3) Develop a Care Plan

- a) Identify the concern
- b) List ALL possible solutions
- c) Analyze your options
- d) Implement the one that best fits your needs and the needs of your loved one
- e) Re-assess as needed

4) Ask for and Accept Help

- Share your concerns and requests in a specific, clear, and concise manner.
- Divide up the tasks, giving each person a responsibility, based on their capabilities.
- Give yourself and others some room for mistakes. Not everyone can provide the same level of care you can, but most try their best.
- Don't allow paperwork to get the best of you. You CAN get through it. –Stay in touch with your social worker or case manager.

5) Make a Physical Change in Helping Yourself

- Exercise: Engage in something physically active that you enjoy for at least 30 minutes, three times a week, such as walking, dancing, biking, running, yoga, swimming, or stretching.
- Eat well: Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains. Avoid indulging in quick pick-me-ups such as candy, coffee, or fast food.
- Reward yourself: Treat yourself to a well deserved treat such as a massage, golf day, a manicure, dinner with yourself or a friend, concert, or movie.
- Make time for YOU:
 - *Schedule it*- Don't cancel or postpone your "me" time.
 - *Look for shortcuts*- Find ways in which you can save time, for example: pay bills online, have medications on automatic refill, or prepare multiple meals ahead of time.
 - *Buy time*- Sometimes and if financially possible, you might just want to splurge on outsourcing. If you can have groceries delivered or buy "ready to cook" meals and this will give you more time to focus on YOU, then do it!
- Slow down and B-R-E-A-T-H-E

A Caregiver's Bill of Rights

I have the right: To take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will enable me to take better care of my loved one.

I have the right: To seek help, even though others may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.

I have the right: To maintain aspects of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things just for myself.



Southern Caregiver Resource Center
Caring for those who care for others

**We are here to help you by providing free support services
to give you the answers to your questions.**

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