



CAN WE TALK ABOUT CAREGIVING?

Tips to Support Family Caregivers

Caregivers are an essential part of our healthcare system. Many people, though, don't see themselves as a "caregiver" and, as a result, don't realize the critical role that they play. Here are five tips to help caregivers recognize their role, learn about the resources that can support their specific needs and feel more prepared for the challenges of caregiving.



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1

Recognize that you are a caregiver.

Many people step up to help a loved one who is sick because they believe that is what is expected of them as a family member or friend. However, being a caregiver and assuming that role is so much more than kinship or spending time together; it involves taking on many unplanned or extra actions to help someone who is sick maintain their quality of life and well-being. As a caregiver, you may help with activities of daily living (dressing, bathing, toileting), prepare meals, organize or administer medications, and accompany and/or drive your loved one to appointments. You may provide this help in person or handle the arrangements from afar. In either case, these are meaningful tasks that may easily add up. Recognizing that these tasks are done by a caregiver – and that support is available – may help lift a weight many people don't realize they carry.

#NPAFProTip: *Connect with your loved one's care team by telling the doctors, nurses and others that you are the patient's caregiver and ask them to include a notation about your supporting role and contact information in the patient's medical records. This is an important step to be recognized for your role and involved in care planning and decisions for your loved one as part of the care team.*

2

Anticipate the total costs that come with caregiving.

Healthcare and the associated expenses for caring for a loved one can be costly for everyone involved. These costs may pop up to cover co-pays for prescription medications, durable medical equipment to keep your loved one safe in the home, hospital parking fees and transportation costs. There may even be unexpected costs associated with helping to get your loved one's insurance claims and finances in order. Furthermore, caregiving duties may interfere with your ability to keep a regular job schedule and may result in reduced income. To prevent financial distress, it is important to ask the care team about resources available to help understand the anticipated costs for supports you or your loved one may need, and to ask about them early even if you are not sure you will need it.

#NPAFProTip: *Contact [Patient Advocate Foundation](#) for support if financial or other concerns about making ends meet are worrying you as a caregiver. Depending on where you live, you may even be eligible to get paid as a caregiver by Medicaid.*

3

Plan for your own needs and support.

Being a caregiver can take a toll on your own health and well-being. The reality of caregiving is that many people feel overwhelmed about the number and types of tasks they need to handle and need guidance to learn the steps. Because caregivers are overwhelmed, many often put off their own preventive care and struggle to find the time to take care of themselves. Finding people to help you assist your loved one, getting training and using available caregiving resources can help you stay strong and healthy so you can do a better job and feel more confident in your caregiving role.

***#NPAFProTip:** An app like [CaringBridge](#) or [Lotsa Helping Hands](#) can help caregivers organize how people provide assistance so it's truly helpful instead of adding to the strain.*

4

Identify people who can support you.

Caregiving can be both a rewarding and isolating experience. To continue doing your best, it's important to think about and surround yourself with things that bring you comfort and joy. Much like you are there for your loved one, you should identify key people to call on for support or a friendly chat when you need it. People often want to help. Prioritizing simple steps that can bring you joy or ease your burden is a good way to give them guidance about the help they can provide. Support groups and respite services may also be available in your community.

***#NPAFProTip:** In terms of preserving your own well-being, consider making your own care plan if you haven't already. Use our [Can We Talk About Care Planning guide](#) to get started.*

5

Know where to find help.

Caregivers are often pressed into their roles without any guidance or training for the things they are supposed to do to care for their loved one at home or from afar. Knowing who to talk to or where to go in your community to get help is important to ensure that caregivers feel confident in carrying out their responsibilities. Area agencies on aging are located in every community and are a helpful place to start to find the support you need. The caregiving resources included here, and on [NPAF.org](#), may also guide you to find the help you need.

***#NPAFProTip:** When connecting with an organization over the phone, like your local area agency on aging, be sure to write down the name(s) and contact information of the people you speak with. These people can easily be the ones you may rely on for support.*

CAREGIVING RESOURCES



GENERAL

- **AARP** – Family Caregiving Basics, www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/?intcmp=GLBNAV-SL-CAR-BAS
- **Caregiver Action Network** – Family Caregiver Toolbox, caregiveraction.org/family-caregiver-toolbox
- **The National Alliance for Caregiving** – General Caregiving, www.caregiving.org/resources/general-caregiving
- **Reiter & Walsh, PC** – Disability Support Group Finder, www.abclawcenters.com/support-group



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- **Administration for Community Living** – National Family Caregiver Support Program, acl.gov/programs/support-caregivers/national-family-caregiver-support-program
- **Archangels** – Finding Caregiving Resources by State, www.archangels.me/resources
- **Aunt Bertha** – General Help in Your Area, findhelp.org
- **CaringBridge** – A web resource/app to securely share health updates and receive support, www.caringbridge.org
- **Department of Health and Human Services** – What Caregiver Support Is Available in My Area?, www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/Partnerships/Downloads/AskMedicareCaregiverSupport.pdf
- **Lotsa Helping Hands** – A web resource/app to coordinate help, communicate updates and receive emotional support, lotsahelpinghands.com
- **National Association of Area Agencies on Aging** – Find aging resources in your area, www.n4a.org

Please note: If you click on the link and you are not automatically redirected to the website, you can also copy the link and paste it in a new URL browser.



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- **ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center** – Caregiver Financial Assistance, archrespite.org/consumer-information/caregiver-financial-assistance
- **American Council on Aging** – Getting Paid as a Caregiver by Medicaid, www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/getting-paid-as-caregiver
- **Foundation for Financial Planning** – Consumer Resources, ffprobono.org/consumer-resources
- **Patient Advocate Foundation** – National Financial Resource Directory, www.patientadvocate.org/explore-our-resources/national-financial-resource-directory
- **The National Alliance for Caregiving** – Extra Help Virtual Toolkit, www.caregiving.org/extra-help-virtual-toolkit



COPING and EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- **AARP**
 - **AARP Caregiving Community**, www.aarp.org/caregiving/community/?intcmp=AE-CAR-SUBNAV-OC-COMM
 - **Caregiver Life Balance**, www.aarp.org/caregiving/life-balance/?intcmp=AE-CAR-SUBNAV-CLB
 - **AARP Caregiving Support Line** – Monday-Friday, 7am-11pm; 1-877-333-5885 (English); 1-888-971-2013 (Spanish)
- **Caregiver Action Network**
 - **Care Community**, caregiveraction.org/community
 - **Caregiver Agencies and Organizations**, caregiveraction.org/resources/agencies-and-organizations



EDUCATION and GUIDES

- **AARP – Caregiving Info – Medical**, www.aarp.org/caregiving/health/?intcmp=GLBNAV-SL-CAR-HEA
- **Caregiver's Respite** – Educational resources and tips for caregivers, caregiversrespite.org