

# Caregiving Corner

Resources & Solutions for Caregivers

## You're a Caregiver – Now What?

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If you have been following this series, you have been exposed to just a fraction of the issues that can make caregiving a rewarding, yet difficult reality for so many people. From the first conversations about caregiving to the strain that can eventually plague this partnership, many variables will impact the experience of both receiving and providing care. Now that caregivers have worked their way through this maze of issues, it is now time to organize the information and resources available and prepare for the caregiving process that could be short or long-term.

First, there are many documents that are important to obtain and review as caregiving begins to take place. Legal documents such as living wills, advance care directives, and powers of attorney are critical documents that must be reviewed by and discussed with all concerned parties. Copies of these documents should be given to each family member so that everyone is aware of the content and so that each person has the information in the event of an emergency. Such documents as these will also need to be available if the older adult moves to a different state, moves into a retirement or long-term care community, or if they enter into the hospital system. Banking documents should also be stored with other legal papers. These financial papers will need to be accessible for applying for Medicaid, moving into long-term care facilities, or drawing up additional legal documents. Record keeping during times of calm can save caregivers the

hassle of additional paperwork and confusion when a crisis occurs.

Next, information about community resources can be collected to assist with caregiving duties. This could be in the form of guides that include information about local long-term facilities, service providers, and licensed professional in the area of law or financial planning. Caregivers should also collect information about resources available through area non-profit agencies or churches such as respite programs and support groups. Many smaller, regional newspapers and publications will also highlight changes in the community that may impact a service or product that might be used by those caring for loved ones. While gathering community resources, it is important to keep in mind that what lies ahead in caregiving is unknown and, therefore, information pertaining to any type of service or program may be helpful later on even if it does not specifically address an issue that is currently being dealt with. Many people involved in caregiving or who are themselves aging report that they most often get information simply by asking friends, neighbors, or those people who are known to have participated in caregiving in some way.

If you have had time to prepare for caregiving or being cared for, it may also be helpful to consider some of the things previously discussed while caregiving is still a relatively small part of your life. Taking time to give information to others is just as important as taking the time to collect the information. Have family members been

informed about preferences or the possible options that will be considered in the future? If the opportunity is available, the caregiver and care recipient should also think about the ways they may be able to combat stress when it arises. What are some of the things that you believe counter stress that you may already use in your everyday life? How could you best implement them in a caregiving scenario?

Experience and information, even if they come from other people, are two important tools to use as you move forward in caregiving. Taking time to familiarize yourself with how the aging services system works and what decisions will need to be made down the road can save valuable time in the future. Caregiving will not always be easy, but educating yourself to be an informed caregiver or aging individual will enable you to face challenges confidently.