

YOU, THE CAREGIVER

Topic #8: Looking After Yourself!

Baby Boomers are referred to as the “Sandwich Generation” because while they’re getting older they may also be taking care of their own children and their aging parents all at the same time. In all of history, no other generation has been faced with this challenge.

Being a caregiver to a parent can range from a few hours a week to around-the-clock care. Either way, what this amounts to is less time for personal and family life. And that can mean difficulty balancing a job and caregiving responsibilities, along with financial, physical, and emotional stress.

If you find yourself in a caregiver role, one of the most important things you can do is to take care of yourself! It sounds simple but, in some cases, it’s easier said than done.

At Meridian At Home we’ve developed some helpful tips to make care giving a little easier on you.

- **Plan Ahead: How much time can you realistically give? Can other family members or friends help? Know and set boundaries for yourself. As difficult as it may be, try not to let guilt make you commit to more than you can realistically do.**

- **Don't Neglect Your Own Health**—Research suggests that the demands and emotional stress on caregivers put them at higher risk for health problems. To avoid getting sick, be sure to eat right, exercise, and set apart some “me time.” Consider meditation and other relaxation techniques.
- **Ask For and Accept Help:** Don't try to be a super human! Prioritize responsibilities and share the work with other family members. If they can't help, ask what other assistance they can provide such as monetary support, catering or bringing food, etc.
- **Take One Day At A Time:** Breaking time commitments down into days or a week at a time makes care giving more manageable. Try to set realistic goals.
- **A Caregiver For The Caregiver:** In any community there are local resources that provide help to caregivers. They can include adult day care, church support groups, or your home care agency.
- **Enhance Your Coping Skills:** Sometimes deep breathing just isn't enough! Talk to someone about what you are feeling and remember that feelings of anger, resentment, frustration, or guilt are all normal. Check with your local hospital, church group, or organizations like the Alzheimer's Association to see what training they may offer to help you cope.
- **Be prepared for Setbacks:** Just when you think you have your situation under control, setbacks may happen. A trusted home health aide may leave; your loved one's health may deteriorate. It's important to remain as flexible as possible and try to accept changes as they occur. Take one day at a time and you'll find ways to adapt your caregiving strategy to changes that occur.

- **Establish A Caregiver Budget:** Expect to incur some expenses while caring for a loved one such as buying occasional medical supplies, food, or medications. Again, establish boundaries where possible.
- **Give Yourself A Pat On The Back:** You deserve it!

Your compassion and love for your family member are why you took on the caregiver's role in the first place. Being a caregiver can be rewarding, but it can also take a toll on you if you aren't careful.

If you have any questions about your health, or the continued health of your loved ones, contact us. Meridian At Home Advisors specialize in listening to your health care concerns and identifying the services and technologies that will allow you or a person close to you to continue to lead a healthy, independent life at home. Our advisors will gladly arrange for a registered nurse to conduct a free, in-home consultative assessment. Call us toll-free at 1-800-894-6885. You can also click on [Connect with Meridian At Home](#) to have one of our advisors contact you at a convenient time. Meridian At Home, Where you want to be.