



Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an effort to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator addresses topics of most frequently asked questions via **Caregiver's Answers, Topics and Helpful Information (CATHI)**. Additionally, caregivers are also invited to e-mail individual questions to the Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org.

Three Caregiving Tips to Start the Year off Right

Being a family caregiver can be described as a journey that you and your loved one are on together. If you could map out your caregiving experience, what would the route look like? What are the pit stops and detours you've had to navigate to get to this point? What are the lessons you've learned along the way that could be helpful for the next part of the journey? Reflecting on these questions will help you see where you are on your caregiving map and how far you have come in your journey.

*Looking back over the last year and celebrating your wins – no matter how small or big – can help boost your outlook on the year of caregiving ahead. *

As you and your loved one embark on a brand-new year, here are some tips to help you embrace and cope with all the ups and downs of being a family caregiving.

1. Celebrate your caregiving victories

Caregiving victories could have been:

- Cooking a delicious new recipe that the person in your care enjoys
- A health care professional giving the person in your care a clean bill of health after an illness
- Spending an afternoon with friends while your loved one is visiting with relatives or in respite care
- Giving the person in your care a sponge bath without any mishaps

- Learning how to safely transfer the person in your care from their bed to a chair

As a caregiver, it can be easy to forget that you are making a positive difference in your loved one's life, especially during the difficult time. When the added pressure of caregiving leaves you feeling bogged down by negativity and stress, you could be opening yourself up to unhealthy coping mechanisms.

Turning small wins into big victories will help you acknowledge and appreciate your own caregiving contribution, both of which are a significant part of maintaining your own health and well-being. Keep track of the happy moments with a journal or happiness jar and reflect on them to regain a positive perspective when times get tough.

2. Declutter your caregiving toolbox

Out with the old and in with the new! That is a typical expression we hear at the start of the new year. For some individuals, this is the perfect time to take inventory of their possessions and discard the things they no longer need or use. As a caregiver, you can apply the same principle to declutter the home of health care equipment and supplies that are no longer useful or that your loved one no longer needs.

Items to discard are:

- Expired or unused medicine. Never give away unused prescription medicine as this could seriously harm a person. Medication should be taken to the nearest pharmacy to be appropriately and safely disposed of.
- Damaged or broken medical equipment.
- Open packages of medical care supplies such as gauze and bandages used to treat open wounds. Although the supplies may appear to be clean, they are no longer sterile and therefore make them unsafe.
- Stretched out or frayed compression stockings. Certain compression stockings are fitted to a person by health care professions and have a lifecycle of about ten washes. If the stockings no longer fit properly, they are no longer doing the job they were meant to do. So, they need to be discarded of.

Consider donating:

- Gently used mobility aid devices that your loved one no longer uses such as canes, walkers, crutches, or wheel chairs.
- Clothing and shoes that the person in your care finds difficult to put on or wear comfortably throughout the day.
- Unopened packages of medical care supplies and equipment.

3. Join a caregiver support group

In school we have been taught the value of learning from our peers. The same concept applies to caregiving. While each caregiving situation is different, there is so much we can learn from other caregivers.

Joining a caregiver support group or getting together with other caregivers that you know through your own network of family and friends may be a good way to share caregiving tips and strategies. You can also be a sound board for another caregiver who just needs someone to listen. By being a part of a caregiver support group, it can help you can new perspectives about your caregiving role. It can also help you remain socially connected with individuals who can empathize with and understand your situation.

If you feel more comfortable speaking to a professional one-on-one, different counselors can provide you with valuable insight about caregiving and help you come up with a customized plan of action. You will need to contact your local resource agency, like as Senior Resources of Guilford and they can help you get connected with resources in your area. There are also Memory Cafés available in certain areas. A Memory Café is for caregivers and their loved ones who have been diagnosed with any form of dementia to come and socialize with others going through a similar experience. Caregivers can use <https://www.memorycafedirectory.com/> to find a Memory Café near them. Also, if you currently reside in Guilford County, they have a Family Caregiver Support Program that will help you get connected with resources and support groups. To contact the Family Caregiver Support Program at Senior Resources of Guilford call 336-373-4816.

This article was adapted from *Three Caregiving Tips to Start the Year of Right*, Elizz, 2017.

****If you would like to join our mailing list to learn more about programs and services available o you contact our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org***

For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 884-6981 in High Point, all other areas (336) 333-6981 or the Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (336) 373-4816 in Greensboro or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.



North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program
Completing the Care