



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.

Finding Caregiving Support: Making Caregiving More Rewarding

As a family caregiver you may have moments where you feel overwhelmed and alone, but despite the challenges caregiving can be a rewarding experience. There are several things you can do to make the caregiving process easier and more pleasurable for both you and your loved one. These tips can help you get the support you need while being able to care for your loved one that will benefit both of you.

Tip 1: Accept your feelings

Caregiving can trigger difficult emotions, such as, anger, fear, guilt, helplessness, and grief. It is important to be aware of the feelings and acknowledge these feelings. Try to accept what you are feeling, both the good and the bad. Do not beat yourself up over your doubts and hesitations. Having these feelings does not mean that you do not love your family member, these feelings just mean you are simply human. It can still be upsetting, even when you understand why you are feeling the way you do. It is important that you talk about your feelings, so you can deal with them. It does not help to keep your emotions bottled up, try to find one person you trust and can confide in, someone who is able to listen without judgement or interruptions.

Tip 2: Find Caregiver Support

Even if you are the primary family caregiver, it might not be possible to do everything on your own, especially if you are caregiving for you loved one long distance. You will need to seek help

from friends, siblings, even other family members, and don't forget about your health professionals. If you do not get the adequate support you need, you will find yourself burning out quickly. This could potentially compromise your ability to provide care for your loved one. But before you run out and seek help, it is important you have a clear understanding of your loved one's need. It could benefit you to make a list of all the caregiving tasks that are required and try to be as specific as possible. Then determine the task that you can handle and be realistic. With the remaining tasks on the list are the ones you will need to ask for help with.

It is not always easy to ask others for help but making it as easy for them will help the process. Set aside one-on-one time to talk to that person and go over the list of the needs that you have already prepared. Point out their areas of strength and where their services might be best used. Don't forget to ask them if they want to help, and if they do what ways would they like to help. Also make sure the person understands what would most benefit you and the care recipient. There are also other places you can turn to for caregiver support such as your church, support groups, social workers, and organizations specific to your family member's illness or disability.

Tip 3: Really connect with your loved one

Caring for a loved one can bring pleasure to both you and the care recipient if it is done the right way. Being calm and relaxed and taking the time each day to really connect with the person you are caring for can release hormones that boost your mood, help reduce stress, and trigger biological changes that improve your physical health. By doing this it will also have the same effect on your loved one. The person you are caring for may no longer be able to communicate verbally, but it is important to remember to take the time focus fully on them. Avoid distractions and make eye contact, hold the person's hand, and talk in a calm, reassuring voice. When you can connect in this way, you will experience a process that lowers your stress and supports both you and your loved ones physical and emotional well-being.

Tip 4: Attend to your own needs

If you are burned out and overwhelmed by the daily routine of caregiving, it can become difficult to connect with the person you are caring for. It is essential that while you are caring for your loved one, you don't forget to care for your own needs. **Caregivers need care, too!** Make sure to take time for yourself and relax daily and talk with someone that can make sense of your situation and your feelings. You might find it helpful to keep a journal and write down some of your thoughts and feelings. Watch out for signs of depression and don't be afraid to seek professional help if needed. Stay social and keep doing things that you enjoy. Also maintain your physical needs, exercise regularly, and eat right. Most importantly make sure you are getting enough sleep and keeping up with your own health care.

Tip 5: Take advantage of community services

Most communities offer services to help and assist caregivers. Depending on your community, the cost of services may be based on ability to pay or covered by the care receiver's insurance. Services that may be available in your community might include adult day care centers, home health aides, home-delivered meals, respite care, transportation, and skilled nursing. To find about caregiver services in your community, call your local senior center or the county information and referral system like the Senior Resources of Guilford. Advocacy groups for the disorder your loved one is suffering from might be able to recommend local services. Knowing the resources and services that are available to your loved one can help the caregiving process.

The information in this article was adapted from Family Caregiving: Finding Caregiver Support and Making Caregiving More Rewarding, HelpGuide.org, by Melinda Smith, M.A. and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. March 2018.

****If you would like to join our mailing list to learn more about programs and services available to 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