



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.

Caregiving During the Holidays

For Caregivers, the holidays can bring a host of challenges. In addition to the stresses brought by the holidays, caregivers also have the responsibility of ensuring the care for their loved one. Below is listed key tips to navigating through these stressful times.

Be honest about the change in your life

While the holidays are full of traditions, it is time to be honest about the change in your life as a caregiver, and the change in your loved one's life. You or your loved one may have enjoyed more extravagant traditions in the past, such as taking long trips to a relative's house or making large amounts of food. However, you may need to recalibrate the traditions, as they may no longer be appropriate. It is important to be honest with yourself and your loved one as you enjoy the holiday season together and to focus on what truly makes the holidays special.

Make it Meaningful

Focus on what has made the holidays special for you, your family, and your loved one. It is urged that what your focus on during the holidays needs to be worth your time and energy. It is important to use the holiday season to look back on what has made the holidays special in the past and how to do that in your new role as a caregiver. Finding the special memories that you and your family cherish during the holidays makes this time and allows for reflection with friends and family.

Stay positive

Your attitude and energy set the emotional barometer of your caregiving environment. We are reminded that we set the tone for the day in our demeanor and positive attitude toward not only our loved ones for whom we are caring for. We also set the tone for our family around us during the holiday season. Though we might not be able to accomplish everything we set out to do in our care for our loved ones as a caregiver, maintaining a positive attitude as a caregiver is beneficial to your loved one, your family, but most of all, YOURSELF.

Maintain a self-care routine

As a caregiver, you will likely find yourself indoors most of the day while you are caring for your loved one. While it may feel selfish to tend to your own needs during this time, ensuring that you are well-rested and maintaining a self-care routine allows you to give more quality care to your loved one. Those who can get out and walk a few times per week are less likely to have an illness. Getting outside during the day helps reinvigorate your mind and help boost your morale. Pouring into yourself as a caregiver, though it may feel selfish, allows you to care for yourself more richly.

Holiday greetings and a brief note

Some Caregivers have had success in writing a brief describing the person's condition and enclosing it in a holiday greeting card. This can be a nonthreatening way to inform distant or uninvolved relatives about the realities of the caregiving situation. If written in a tone that is not accusatory or guilt-inducing, family members may be more forthcoming with assistance or, at least, have a better understanding of the effort you are putting into providing care.

An opportunity for communication

It's hard to know how much to communicate about a loved one's decline in cognitive functioning and personal care needs. Who do you tell? How much do you tell?

Although it is understandable to have reservations about discussing your loved one's impairments, honest communication about the realities of caregiving situation offers others the opportunity to respond with assistance. Sharing the truths of your situation may help reduce some of the feelings of isolation and lack of appreciation common in caregivers.

Share your wish list

Respite: some caregivers ask for time off from caregiving duties as a gift for the holidays. This could mean another family member gives you a break. Sometimes asking for a Saturday off "in the next three months" is more accepted, as family members can then schedule it into their

calendars. If this is not possible, perhaps they would consider paying for a home care worker or a stay at a respite facility. Your local Family Caregiver Support Program Coordinator can help you locate these resources in your area.

Home repairs: Do light bulbs need changing, or grab bars need installation? The maddening pile of junk in the garage needs to go to the dump? Tasks such as these may be perfect way for a family member to help out if providing personal care is too uncomfortable for them.

Care for you! How about a gift card for a massage, facial, or manicure? How about an opportunity to spend the day fishing or a walk in the outdoors?

Book your homecare worker early! Speak with your homecare or home care agency early about your holiday plans!

A little thank you goes a long way

After the holidays, write a thank you note to family members or friends who spent time with your loved one. Emphasize the positive impact their visit or brief time spent with your loved one had on them. This may reinforce positive feelings from their visit and diminish any discomfort they experienced. They may then be more encouraged to visit again or more supportive of your efforts.

The information in this article was adapted from Caregiving and the Holidays: from stress to success, Family Caregiver Alliance, December 2014.

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****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