

STAYWELL

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The day that you have been looking forward to for years is finally here. The kids are gone and there is more time to travel, visit grandchildren, and do the things you enjoy. Then the phone call comes—a parent or loved one is in need of attention and additional time. Schedules are more hectic than ever and you are frustrated that once again there is no time to do the things you want.

This scenario can often lead to anger, resentment, increased stress, and guilt. However there is hope and ways to avoid resentment—especially guilt. One idea experts give is to be prepared. Preparation and communication will decrease the intensity of a situation among family members. The situation does not always change, but how we deal with it can change. Another important part of caring for a parent is scheduling time away for the caregiver. Caregivers need to take care of themselves, because the impact of caring for elderly loved ones can lead to difficulties. Here are a few tips to deal with this situation more effectively.

Time Management

Time is one of the biggest challenges when caring for the elderly. The key is to plan and schedule appointments and errands in advance.

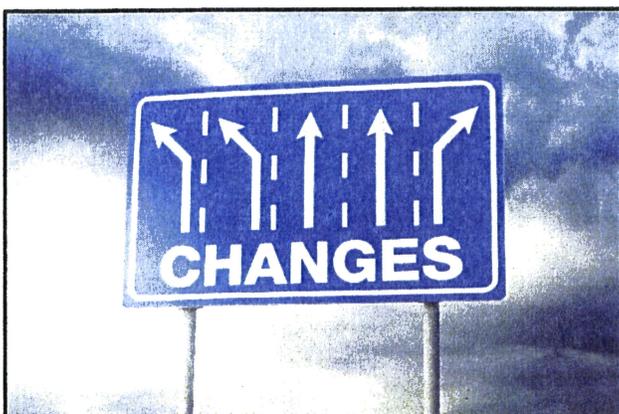
Writing an agenda on a white board helps loved ones remember, gives them something to

look forward to, and helps the caregiver to schedule around this time. It will also allow the important interruptions to be treated as such, rather than creating resentment and guilt from situations that could have been planned and scheduled. With organization, arrangements can be made in advance in case an unexpected conflict arises.



Have Fun

When caregivers understand their responsibilities, it is easier to enjoy the time with their loved one, rather than the situation becoming a burden. For faster and easier shopping, encourage and assist the loved one to create a to-do list. After completing errands, treat them to lunch. Discuss happy memories, laugh, and enjoy the opportunity. Create and find joy in the moment.



Exercise and physical activity

The demands of caring for a loved one can be very tiring, however exercise will decrease fatigue. Regular exercise gives us strength, endurance and keeps hormones at steady levels. This will



reduce the ups and downs that lead to stress, tension, and low energy. Just as exercise is important for you, it is

essential for older family members. Consult their physician before beginning an exercise routine. Exercise will help make their lives easier and more comfortable. Aerobic capacity, strength, and flexibility can be improved in most individuals up to age 95 and has been shown to improve lifestyle and quality of life in later years even adding to greater independence. Most long-term care and assisted living facilities offer programs, along with local senior or community centers.

Lighting

Weakened sight can vary between individuals. Most people struggle seeing in low-light situations as they age which can lead to accidents. Prepare your home now by revising lighting for the elderly. Ensure light bulbs are available and replaced when needed. Keep stairs, closets, and entryways illuminated. Pay specific attention to outdoor lights, walkways, and steps.

Safety devices

Now is the time to install safety handles in tubs, showers, and near toilets for your future and for when loved ones visit. Safety handles can be installed easily and may simply bolt to the side of the tub and can be added when a family member visits.

Provide stools to sit on while showering or in the tub and install anti-slip mats. Another common safety issue is tripping hazards such as area rugs. Rugs should be secured properly and have anti-slip mats or tabs installed. Ensure all hand rails on stairs and steps are sturdy.

Simple features such as rocker switches and levers on sinks and tubs are easier on arthritic hands and will make life more comfortable for elderly loved ones, and ourselves as we age.

It is also important to review care options and desires in advance with parents and elderly loved ones. Care options include assisted living, adult day care, home health care, sibling assistance, group homes, and skilled nursing facilities. These conversations should also include advance health care decisions such as life support, resuscitation orders, and medical power of attorney. The more we plan and discuss the future when dealing with elderly loved ones, the less stressful it is for them, for us, and our families.

