

# Tips for Caregivers, from Caregivers

## 1. Join a caregiver's support group

- *“A caregiver’s support group is a ready-made group of people who will understand you. It can be a great stress reliever. You’ll gain new insights and expand your support network.”*

## 2. Accept help

- *“Accepting help with minding the store.” Offers of sitting with a spouse, partner, or parent to give you free time—even though there’s protest and fear of abandonment—should be accepted. Without a rested caregiver nothing works.”*
- *“Remember to say yes to offers of help (sitting with your spouse/partner, etc.) even though they may be made a little uneasy and feel “abandoned.” Without you rested and strong, they will be lost.”*
- *“You don’t need to be a superhero to take care of your loved one. Think of those offers of help as compliments. Others care about you, so let them show it.”*

## 3. Ask for help

- *“It’s common to have friends and family who want to help, but many aren’t sure what to offer. Take the initiative and ask for what you need. Also, think about hiring professional caregivers. You can get help in your home, at an adult day care center, or in a nursing home or assisted living facility.”*

## 4. Get organized

- *“The most important tool I have used was to make a list before doctor appointments. Write down the answers to these three points:*

*1. Why we are here*

*2. What’s going on?*

*3. What’s next?*

*Hand this sheet to the nurse when he/she is taking vitals and ask that it be given to the doctor. Both my spouse’s primary and neurologist expressed gratitude for my having done this and wished other caregivers would do the same.”*

- *“As far as hiring home health caregivers, this can be a scheduling dance and you may need to try different times of day before settling on a good fit.”*
- *“I explored assisted living facilities just in case something happened to me, but luckily I did not have to use it.”*
- *“Start getting end-of-life documents in order such as advanced directives and funeral arrangements.”*

## 5. Be an advocate

- *“If a caregiver is sent that you don’t care for you can request to have someone else sent!”*
- *“Know that you can set-up interviews with different hospice providers. If your hospice provider sends someone that doesn’t work well with your loved one, you can ask for someone else to be sent.”*

## 6. Make time for yourself

- *“I used to think if I go out with my friends for coffee it will cost me \$35 or a walk around the block \$15 for the sitter. But if you need to do that to keep your sanity you do just that. Look at the overall picture or you go crazy thinking is this worth it or not? You much keep your mental sanity and physical health or you won’t do your loved one any good.”*
- *“Taking care of your loved one is an important part of your life, but it’s also critical to take care of yourself. Take a break and spend time on your interests and hobbies. Exercise, read, visit friends, listen to your favorite music or get a massage. Make time for whatever brings you peace and relaxation.”*

## 7. Pay attention to your body

- *“Feeling tired, but can’t sleep? Has your appetite change? Talk to a master caregiver: your doctor. You’ll get help and advice on taking care of your own health.”*

## 8. Know you’re not alone

- *“Reach out to other caregivers to learn and understand early on—you’re not alone!”*

## 9. Each day is a new day

- *“Facing each day as a new one, knowing I was trying my best even if I was impatient at times, and knowing he was trying too.”*

## 10. Alzheimer's & Dementia Specific Tips

- *“People with dementia are all different. Strategies that work with one person may not work with another and it is perfectly okay to ignore the advice of others who mean well but may not understand how individual dementia is.”*
- *“In group, I learned that it is okay to not be truthful with people with dementia if the truth will hurt them.”*