



# 50 Tips for Family Caregivers

***The booklet was written by Janice Wallace, The Eldercare Coach.***

***Don't struggle with eldercare issues alone.***

***Let me help you...***

- *Be a confident and successful caregiver.*
- *Set limits without guilt.*
- *Avoid burnout by developing a self care plan.*

***Call me or email me today to schedule a free 30 minute  
consultation.***

***Janice Wallace  
415-661-3271***

***[eldercoach@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eldercoach@sbcglobal.net)  
[www.caringforcaregivers.com](http://www.caringforcaregivers.com)***

## 50 Tips for Family Caregivers

- ✓ Plan ahead. How might your loved one's condition change in the next 6 months? Anticipate issues and research resources you may need.
- ✓ Start with a geriatric assessment that reviews your loved one's ability to live independently. The resulting care plan will describe where they need help and offer suggestions on how to supplement their care.
- ✓ Have a list of items you can use help with. When someone offers to help ask them to complete something from your list.
- ✓ Don't wait for others to guess what you need, ask often for help and be explicit about what you need.
- ✓ Participate in a support group.
- ✓ Visit your doctor regularly, follow his/her advice and take all needed medications.
- ✓ If your loved one lives far away, hire a geriatric care manager to be your eyes and ears on the ground.
- ✓ Keep a log or diary about your loved one's physical condition, mental and emotion condition and the care they receive.
- ✓ Review your log when preparing to meet with the doctor or eldercare professional.
- ✓ Bring a written list of questions and observations to doctor appointments.
- ✓ Take notes of the doctor's instructions.
- ✓ Make sure your loved one has a will/living trust, healthcare power of attorney and a power of attorney for property.
- ✓ Make sure you have a will/living trust, healthcare power of attorney and a power of attorney for property.
- ✓ Ask you loved one about the types of treatment they want if he/she becomes terminally ill.
- ✓ If your loved one lives in a facility, visit at different times of day to get a feel for how things go when you are not expected.
- ✓ Make time once a day to do something just for you.
- ✓ Examine your values as a caregiver and create a caregiving mission statement. (see the last page of this booklet for tips)

## 50 Tips for Family Caregivers

- ✓ Use your caregiving mission to establish priorities and make decisions.
- ✓ Use the internet to explore care options in your local area. Don't have a computer at home? Go to the public library.
- ✓ When working with your family, watch for and question when old roles and old ways of acting resurface.
- ✓ Question gender based assumptions about caregiving. Just because someone is the daughter doesn't automatically make her the best caregiver.
- ✓ Learn the difference between normal memory difficulties and the beginning stages of dementia.
- ✓ Never assume or accept that a problem is a normal consequence of aging. Changes in a person's condition should be questioned and discussed with a doctor.
- ✓ Look for ways to leverage yourself. Take the time to analyze what you must do yourself and what tasks you can delegate to family, friends or paid caregivers.
- ✓ Pick your battles. Prioritize and focus on issues related to health and safety. Be willing to let less important items slide.
- ✓ Own that you are the expert about your loved one and their preferences.
- ✓ Make taking care of yourself a priority. Who will care for your loved one if you collapse?
- ✓ Join an online support group for those times when you can't leave the house.
- ✓ Use a checklist when selecting a care facility. It will help you compare your options and make the best choice.
- ✓ Be an active and involved family member if your loved one lives in a facility. Studies show that individuals with involved and assertive family members get better care.
- ✓ Know the details of your loved one's care plan and be an active participant in its creation.
- ✓ Prepare for care plan updates by reviewing your log for topics.
- ✓ Bring someone with you to the care plan meetings who will take notes.

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- ✓ Use good meeting techniques to have a successful care plan meeting. Create a list of topics to discuss. Know what outcomes you are seeking. Agree on action steps to be taken and deadlines to be met before the next meeting.
- ✓ If multiple family members are attending the care plan meeting, make sure that you have appointed a family spokesperson. All family members should be in agreement on the points and positions this person will discuss.
- ✓ If your loved one lives in a facility, regularly check his/her clothing and shoes. Replace any worn or torn items. Clothes wear out faster due to frequent washing with strong detergents.
- ✓ Offer feedback to caregivers that is detailed and can be acted upon. Use your log to provide facts about the frequency that an issue occurs, times and dates.
- ✓ Be even handed in your feedback. Find opportunities to sincerely offer praise and thanks to your loved one's caregivers.
- ✓ Hold regular family meetings to share information about your loved one's condition. Close with a review of the "to do" items generate by the meeting and clearly establish who will complete the items and by what dates.
- ✓ Create an emergency plan. Have someone you can call on to care for your loved one if you are ill or injured.
- ✓ Eat a balanced diet and take your vitamins.
- ✓ Exercise several times a week to keep fit and reduce stress.
- ✓ Send your loved one to adult day care so you have time for yourself during the day.
- ✓ Use short term respite programs offered by assisted living facilities and nursing homes.
- ✓ Assign caregiving tasks based on family members' strengths. If a family member is good with numbers, suggest he/she manage your loved one's finances.
- ✓ Ask family members to help even when they live far away. Identify tasks that do not require hands on contact like bill paying or research.
- ✓ If financial resources are running low, educate yourself about how to qualify for Medi-CAL. Get professional advice on how to make a smooth transition to Medi-CAL.
- ✓ Enroll loved ones with dementia in the Alzheimer's Association "Safe Return" program.

## 50 Tips for Family Caregivers

- ✓ Feed your soul. Attend your place of worship. Meditate and pray. Read inspiring books and poems. Find your unique ways to connect with beauty and peace
- ✓ Be patient with yourself. You are doing some of the most difficult work in the world. It won't be perfect...you won't be perfect. Just do your best. Greet each new day as a fresh start.

### Are you at risk for caregiver burnout?

Take this quick quiz to assess your risk for burnout. Put a check mark next to each item that is true for you.

- Are you unable to concentrate at work?
- Have you lashed out at the person you are caring for?
- Have you lost interest in your normal activities?
- Are you tired in the morning no matter how much rest you got the night before?
- Are you overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done?

If you checked 3 or more questions, you are at risk for caregiver burnout.

## 50 Tips for Family Caregivers

### Create your own caregiver mission statement

Start by identifying your caregiving values. Think about what is important to you as a care giver and what is important to the person you are caring for. Once you have identified your values, rank them in order of importance.

Priority Value

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Values some of my clients have shared with me:

Husband: My relationship with my wife comes first, her illness comes second.

Son: My father lives in a safe place where he is well cared for.

Wife: We partner with my husband's doctor to make medical decisions.

Design your caregiving mission statement. Use your top three values to fill in the blanks below.

My caregiving mission is \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_ and

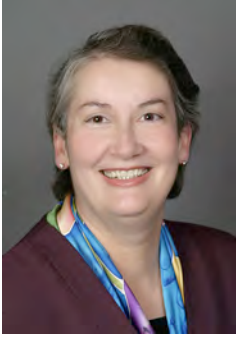
\_\_\_\_\_.

Sample mission statement:

My caregiving mission is to care for my mother and for my father who is my mother's primary caregiver. To offer my father thoughtful and informed feedback and support.

To be present in my parent's daily lives through regular phone calls and visits. To passionately represent my parents needs and values to their professional caregivers.

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**Janice Wallace**  
**The Eldercare Coach**

My caregiving journey began when I could no longer deny that something was terribly wrong with my mother. Right before my eyes an intelligent and articulate woman had turned into a repetitive, paranoid mess.

Over the next 14 years, my family faced one painful challenge after another. We struggled with my mother's loss of independence, finding the right diagnosis for her condition and ultimately her placement in a care facility. Caring for my mother has been a rewarding journey with unexpected gifts. I seek to share what I have learned with my clients. I help my clients address and resolve family conflict and caregiver guilt. We seek the deeper spiritual gifts of caregiving while finding practical solutions to day to day issues such as balancing caregiving with work and family.

My experience as a family caregiver inspires me to serve other caregivers. Caregiving is a challenging role that few of us are prepared for. I'm committed to providing caregivers with the support and resources they need to be successful.

Today, I "walk the talk" with my clients as a long distance and hands on caregiver, dividing my time between my home in San Francisco and my parents' home in Southern California.

***Janice Wallace***

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