

CAREGIVERS: THE HEART OF GIVING IS LOVE

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Being a caregiver for a loved one or friend, no matter their age, can be one of the most rewarding experiences. However, caring for someone you love can be both physically and mentally exhausting. The challenges of caring for those we love in their geriatric stage of life can be overwhelming and riddled with anxiety. Grief and loss can be a large part of caregiving, both for the caregiver and those being cared for. Both are navigating a new relationship with each other and must adapt to a new way of life, which can be a difficult transition to manage on top of the new roles being played in the relationship. We know that each caregiving story is different and has its own unique challenges and rewards, so below we have put together some tips on maximizing your time together and will hopefully help you to build skills to navigate your role as caregiver.

Tips for Caregivers of Older Adults

The following tips were taken from "Family Caregiver Basics- A Practical Guide" on caring.com

- **Take time to prepare yourself.** Faced with a crisis, it's tempting to make decisions quickly without thinking them through. Try to spend some quiet time before you jump onto the caregiving roller coaster to ensure you are making the right decision for you and your loved one.
- **Line up support.** It's important to have buffers so you won't be standing on the front line all by yourself.
- **Bring in the experts.** If you don't have family support, you live far from the person you're caring for, your relationship is explosive or the situation is complicated, consider hiring a geriatric care manager.
- **Consider your own role.** As you enter this new stage in your relationship with the person you're caring for, it's important to remember that you can't control how they act, but you can control how you respond. Take time to honestly consider your own role in the relationship and what you want that to look like.
- **Talk it through.** When a problem arises, address it as it happens. This encourages open communication from both of you.
- **Set boundaries.** It's important for anyone in a caregiving position to set and maintain solid boundaries. If you're clear about how much you're able and willing to do and stick to that, you'll be less susceptible to guilt trips and manipulative behavior. Don't forget your emotional well-being and ensure you set boundaries of how you each will speak and treat each other. If either of you go beyond that make sure you take time to cool off.
- **Join a support group.** A caregiver support group gives you a place to unwind and share your story with people who are having similar experiences, which can be restorative.

WHAT IS SENIOR LIFE SOLUTIONS?

Senior Life Solutions, an intensive outpatient group therapy program, is designed to meet the unique needs of individuals typically ages 65 and older struggling with depression and anxiety often related to aging.

If you or someone you know has experienced any of the following, we can help:

- Recently experienced a traumatic event
- Loss of spouse or close family member
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Changes in appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of energy
- Feelings of sadness or grief lasting longer than two weeks
- Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness

TO LEARN MORE, YOU CAN CONTACT US AT:

**Senior Life Solutions
Gothenburg Health
910 20th Street
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308.537.1030**

Senior Life Solutions (SLS) remains open during this time of uncertainty with the Covid-19 crisis. We are able to offer our group therapy services in-person or by telehealth to meet the specific needs of our seniors in the community. Anyone can make a referral; all you need to do is call our office at 308.537.1030.



Fun Facts About Tulips:

- Tulips are said to signal the arrival of spring
- Tulips bloom between late March and early May, with mid-April being their peak
- Each tulip only blooms for 3-7 days
- Tulips are native to Central Asia
- There are over 150 species of tulips with 3,000 different varieties.
- A cut tulip can grow another inch in your vase.

The final and likely most important tip is to ensure you are taking care of yourself as well. If you're spending a great deal of time with the person you're caring for, make sure that you're doing things to replenish yourself. This will help you stay balanced and less reactive. Maintain a regular exercise regime to blow off steam and arrange for regular weekends off and vacation time if you can. Like the saying on an airplane that talks about putting on your own oxygen mask before attempting to help others, the best way to care for others is to first care for yourself. It is hard to give from an empty cup so below we have provided some tips on ways to help fill your cup and improve your self-care.

Self-Care Tips

Provided by TherapistAid.com

Self-care means taking time to do things you enjoy. Usually, self-care involves everyday activities that you find relaxing, fun, or energizing. These activities could be as simple as reading a book, or as big as taking a vacation.

Self-care also means taking care of yourself. This means eating regular meals, getting enough sleep, caring for personal hygiene, and anything else that maintains good health.

Make self-care a priority. There will always be other things to do, but don't let these interrupt the time you set aside for self-care. Self-care should be given the same importance as other responsibilities.

Set specific self-care goals. It's difficult to follow through with vague goals, such as "I will take more time for self-care". Instead, try something specific, such as "I will walk for 30 minutes every evening after dinner".

Make self-care a habit. Just like eating one apple doesn't eliminate health problems, using self-care just once won't have much effect on reducing stress. Choose activities that you can do often, and that you will stick with.

Set boundaries to protect your self-care. You don't need a major obligation to say "no" to others—your self-care is reason enough. Remind yourself that your needs are as important as anyone else's.

A few minutes of self-care is better than no self-care. Set an alarm reminding you to take regular breaks, even if it's just a walk around the block, or an uninterrupted snack. Oftentimes, stepping away will energize you to work more efficiently when you return.

Unhealthy activities don't count as self-care. Substance use, over-eating, and other unhealthy behaviors might hide uncomfortable emotions temporarily, but they cause more problems in the long run.

Keep up with self-care, even when you're feeling good. Doing so will keep you in a healthy routine. Plus, self-care might be part of the reason *why* you're feeling good!