

Are YOU a Caregiver?



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What do you think of when you hear the word caregiver? Do you picture someone who spends their day providing hands-on care for someone? If so, you are not alone. It's common for people to think of a caregiver as someone who lives with a loved one and assists them with daily activities such as dressing, grooming, walking, and meals. But caregiving includes much more than those hands-on tasks.

Caregiving also includes helping someone with a wide assortment of tasks that enable them to live more independently in the community. Look around and you will notice people assisting an older friend or relative by taking them grocery shopping, picking up medication, accompanying them to appointments, and helping with yard care. These helpers are also considered caregivers, even if they don't live with the person or provide support every day. The tasks they help with, no matter how big or small, are enabling people to continue to live in their homes.

There are thousands of people who are playing a vital role in maintaining the independence of an older person, but don't realize it or don't consider their work as very important. They certainly would not call themselves a caregiver. Are you one of them? Read on to find out.

Are you a son, daughter, neighbor, relative, or friend who:

- Arranges medical appointments and provides transportation too?
- Prepares meals to ensure nutritious food is available?
- Helps pay bills and/or balances the checkbook?
- Helps with cleaning and/or laundry?
- Assists with weekly grocery shopping?
- Sets up medication?

- Receives frequent phone calls with requests for help?
- Feels the need to regularly “check-up” on your parent/loved one to be sure they are okay?

Are you a spouse who:

- Has taken on duties that used to be done by your spouse? (cooking, cleaning, laundry, car maintenance, bookkeeping, bill paying, etc.)
- Needs to accompany your spouse to places he/she used to go alone?
- Is assisting with daily living tasks like dressing, grooming, and bathing?
- Ensures medications are taken properly?
- Makes medical decisions for your spouse?
- Feels unable to leave your spouse home alone?

If you answered “yes” to any of these, then you are a caregiver! You may think that these tasks are just things that you do for the people you love. While that is true, don’t downplay the importance of your assistance in these areas. Without your help, the older person may not be able to continue to live in their own home. The “little” things that you do are crucial to the independence of your loved one.

Identifying yourself as a caregiver is important because it opens the door to many supports and resources that can benefit the person you are caring for, as well as yourself. We know that when caregivers are supported, they can provide care more effectively, more safely, and for a longer period which is a benefit to everyone. If you are a caregiver, please contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center to learn about supports and resources that can help you help the ones you love.

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