

The Life of a Caregiver

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My Story

I never expected that I would become a caregiver at such a young age. I've been taking care of people for more than half of my life. Along the path I've had lots of ups and downs, but mainly I have a lot of memories to cherish that I would not otherwise have.

When I was eighteen, I left college and moved to Greenville, where my grandparents lived. My parents were serving a church several hours away, so I stepped up to help the grands {as I called them}. Growing up I was very close with the grands and they'd done so much for me. I had no qualms about helping out.

About a year after I moved to town, Matilda {my grandmother} began to have episodes of confusion. One day she was supposed to pick me up from work and got lost. Everyone thought she was just stressed out. She'd been to my work place numerous times, so we didn't really understand why she was lost. Within the next two months, she ended up lost on the interstate stopping in towns that were two to three hours away from home on two different occasions. My parents had to drive through the night to pick her up and bring her back home. Thankfully she was in safe locations both times. {Matilda is a widow}

Shortly after this my {then} husband suddenly moved us eighteen hours away to be with his family. Within weeks of my move, my parents took Matilda to the doctor and discovered she had a brain tumor. She had surgery to remove the tumor on my twentieth birthday. That was a difficult birthday, because I had no idea how she was doing. That evening I received the call that she'd come through the surgery successfully and was greatly relieved.

During the six months I was away, we lived with my husband's grandparents. His grandfather was an overweight quadriplegic, dealing with asthma and continuous infections. He was not a very nice man and would get angry for no reason. His wife was a chain smoking asthmatic, who was severely deaf. After moving in, I discovered that we had not been invited {as my husband claimed} and were not wanted. On more than one occasion, grandpa threw plates of spaghetti or meatloaf and potatoes on the wall because he felt like being ornery. There was even one night when other family members became involved and we stayed up all night cleaning the house.

When my marriage ended, I returned to my family after being away for six months. My parents lived in a very small town {blink and you miss it} so I moved in with my Dad's sister and father. For the next two years I helped my aunt care for my grandfather. He was severely hard of hearing by this point and we were worried about him driving. He also had to have a heart bypass during these two years. My other grandmother {Papa's wife}, who had been suffering from Parkinson's disease, also passed away during this period of time.

I saw Matilda {my Mom's Mama} whenever possible and spent time with her. She was recovering from her brain tumor surgery and eventually was able to drive again. When I moved out from my aunt's, I moved in with Matilda. I lived with her for three years, while I continued to rebuild my life. We took care of one another. While I lived with her, Matilda had both of her knees replaced.

In November 1999, Daddy was diagnosed with cancer. He was serving a church three hours away, but Matilda and I tried to go at least once a month to see him. A month before his death, I drove him and my Mom to Jacksonville to see a specialist. I'm thankful for that time with him. After returning, I spent the week of my birthday with him. I left to return home to pack to move to Greenwood, where I was returning to college. He passed away one week after I moved to Greenwood. I did my best to be of assistance to my mother and younger siblings. Although he'd been ill, none of us expected him to pass away and were terribly distraught.

While in college, I took eighteen semester hours and worked a forty hour work week. On the weekend, I drove the seventy-five minutes each way to Greenville to spend time with my grandparents. If there was anything they needed help with, I did what I could to be of assistance. During this time, Papa began to show signs of dementia and was eventually placed in a nursing home. My heart broke to see him deteriorate in this way. He was the last surviving child of twelve children. On some visits he'd ask where his parents or siblings were. We'd usually tell him "home" or "work". These are called therapeutic lies, because we had no desire to upset him. Other days he would tell us that he spent the day working in the mill and had to fix a loom that day, that he'd gone to Tucker's for a bite to eat or that he'd gone down to Sears {remember he was thinking of the old sears stores, not what we know today} to look at TVs.

The night I graduated college, Matilda's younger sister {by 12 years} dropped dead, leaving Matilda the last living child of her parents {she had 4 siblings}. A year after finishing college, I moved eight hours away to be with the man I loved. This slowly became an abusive relationship and I had little to no contact with my family during those three years. Papa died while I was away. One day we'd had a huge fight and I stormed out of the house. Crying, I ran down the street and a woman stopped me. I poured my heart out to her and she gave me a hug and said "I don't know why I'm saying this but I love you and everything will be okay. I'll always be here for you." I never saw that woman again, but the next day I discovered that Papa had been buried the day before. I felt that he found the only way possible to reach out to me. If I

couldn't go to him, he was going to come to me and tell me goodbye. I'd always been a Papa's girl.

During this relationship, Duncan often travelled and I lived with the woman he claimed was his sister. She had considerable health problems and I spent a lot of time caring for both of them. Some days I'd work all day and then come home to spend the night cleaning up where she'd been sick. Duncan also had his own series of health problems we had to worry about.

When I left that relationship, I returned to Greenville. I took a job as a paid caretaker. I sit with a woman who is ninety years old and suffers from dementia. She lives in a basement apartment in her daughter's house and requires around the clock care. I've been with her for three years and have seen a gradual decline during this time. This has not always been easy, especially when she became bedbound last year. I've grown to love this woman and think of her as a member of the family. After all, I spend anywhere from one to four days a week with her. The biggest joy was when she came to Christ and to see her want to hear more about God and his word. She has been a true blessing to me and I pray every day that I can bless her in some way.

I also assist Mama in caring for Matilda. Because my schedule is more flexible, it is easier for me to take her to doctor's visits, the library or for other errands. We've been through a lot with her in the last two years, but have so much to be thankful for. In February 2010, she fell at my nephew's birthday party and broke her neck. The doctors were not optimistic because of her age and said she'd never walk again, be out of the neck brace or able to live on her own. I'll tell you, she's from strong stock and a fighter. Four months later she was living at home. She was only home two weeks, when she fell and broke her hip. She bounced back from that and was out of the neck brace within the next two months. Unfortunately, the most lasting effect of her fall has been the loss of her hearing. This has really made it difficult for her to enjoy so many things {TV shows, books on tape, music, church} that she once loved because she can't hear what's going on. None of the hearing devices we've bought have helped. She also has something called musical ear syndrome, where she hears music in her mind constantly. She tells us she's not crazy and we believe her, but have had a difficult time convincing her of this. Thankfully we've done a lot of research to realize she's not alone in suffering from musical ear syndrome. After that fall, she had to give up driving because she was unable to turn her neck any longer. In 2011 and 2012, she also overcame several more falls and rehab stints that included recovering from a broken arm, the other hip, broken vertebrae in her back and emerMatildacy gall bladder surgery. Thankfully at the moment of this writing, she is 88 years old and still living alone at home. Someone checks on her every day and we take every precaution towards her falling. This has been difficult for her because she's always been so independent. We grow frustrated at her stubbornness to be independent at times, but I can't imagine how difficult it would be to stop doing simple things I've done all my life. She's been a real fighter and a shining example of perseverance.

So while I've not been blessed with children yet, I've plenty of memories with my grandparents. I don't know how much longer I'll be blessed with the lady I sit with and Matilda, but I'll cherish the moments I have with them. As my Mom looks towards a knee replacement, I know that regardless of what career I have, my caregiving days are far from over.

The following is a basic guide for the caregiver or friends of caregiver. With baby boomers reaching retirement age, more and more of our population are moving into that role of caregiver. I hope that this brief overview will at least give you some guidance and tips. At the very end is a list of further resources and scriptures, I hope will be useful for you.

What is a caregiver?

A caregiver is a person that cares for someone that is sick or disabled. Adults also caring for an infant or child according to Dictionary.com is classified as a caregiver.

Who do people care give?

There are many people that our society looks after and offers care. This list is some of the most common aspects:

- A child
- Elderly
- Individual with a disability and needs assistance
- Loved one suffering from a disease {ex. Cancer, dementia, Parkinson's disease, etc} and needs care
- Husband or wife
- Adults may care for a parent or grandparent, but can also care for an aunt, uncle, cousin, sibling, close friend or neighbor
- Caregivers and health care workers care for patients

Caregiver Statistics

- 61% are women
- 13% are 65 years or older
- Most caregivers are middle aged
- 59% have out of the home jobs

From www.womenshelp.gov

Personalities

There are a number of personalities and every person is different. Likewise every caregiving situation is different in some ways from all others.

One of the different things to keep in mind is the different ways the various personalities relate with one another.

In the case for my grandmother, she is very passive and we often wish she would be more vocal about her needs and wants. My mom is the peace maker and calm one. She keeps the peace. I'm the passionate one. I'm very protective and vocal when I notice an injustice or disservice towards my grandmother.

With the lady I sit with, there are three primary caretakers. The three of us are very different and diverse in our personalities, interest and attitudes. However, the three of us balance one another out. One characteristic that is a weakness to one person may be a strength to another.

When dealing with the loved one you're caring for, siblings, aunts and uncles, cousins, friends or other people assisting with the care of your loved one, then you have to find the balance that works best for you. The one thing you want is to keep the environment calm and safe for your loved one.

Often I hear stories of the person receiving care being the volatile person. This makes the situation a lot more different. When I was caring for my ex-husband's grandfather, there were times when he was never happy no matter what was tried. On more than one occasion I had the plate of spaghetti I fixed for his dinner thrown at the wall because he wanted to be contrary. This is difficult to deal with on a constant basis. Again the mix of personalities will dictate the best way to deal with this situation. All I can say is pray hard, remain calm, allow space if possible and seek help when necessary.

Things you need to have/know

If the person lives alone, I'd suggest you get them a lifeline to wear. That way in case of a fall or other injury they can immediately contact help, even if they can't reach the phone.

You may need to dispense their medication. Get a container where you can sort the medication out by day and/or meal.

Find people that are willing to help. There are times when you need a break. Check with other family members, neighbors, friends, church family, etc. to inquire if anyone would be willing to stay or check on the family member. This can be a regular schedule or an as needed basis. Only you know what works best for your situation. Upfront discuss of payment if it is expected and what the terms are is advisable. This will prevent any misunderstanding later.

What does a caregiver do?

This varies depending on the individual and situation. Each case is different. This is a list to give you an idea:

- Grocery shopping
- House cleaning
- Yard care
- Taking trash out
- Cooking
- Shopping
- Paying bills
- Providing transportation

- Giving medicine
- Bathing
- Using the toilet
- Dressing
- Eating

Documents You Need

- Power of Attorney
- Living Will
- Do Not Resuscitate Order {if desired}

Making Hard Decisions

The time may come when you have to make hard decisions. Has the time come to put grandma in a nursing home? Do you have the space for her to move in with you? These are not topics we want to discuss or think about but eventually we will. Some patients will be willing to leave their home and go into a nursing facility or family members home. Other patients will fight you all the way.

These are just a few tips that I hope will help:

- Approach the subject in a non-confrontational manner
- Give your loved one time to think about his/her options
- Try not to railroad the person {take control and give them no say}
- Pray for guidance and direction in dealing with this matter

The care giving team

Depending on the patient's capabilities you may need one or more of these:

- Primary Caregiver
- On Call Nurse
- Doctor
- Other caregivers

- Pastor/Religious Advisor
- Lawyer
- Accountant

If your loved one is homebound contact members of your team to inquire about home visits. If your loved one is bedbound or there is great difficulty in transporting to the doctor, speak with his/her doctor about the situation. Maybe the office has a nurse that will make home visits; maybe hospice will be called in, etc. The doctor will be able to give you some feedback and advice about the best way to proceed.

Keep on Hand

You will need to have the following items easily accessible and on hand. You may want to find a folder or large envelope to keep them in:

- List of medications currently taking
- Insurance
- Medical History
- Medical Contacts
- Identification

When hospice helps out

Hospice is a great resource when the time comes. They provide equipment, supplies and assistance at no charge. If you think you need hospice, I'd advice that you speak with your doctor about the manner. Hospice is usually called in with the decline of that patient from cancer, Alzheimer's and other diseases. Your doctor or local hospice can give you more information.

Just remember to be thankful for all that the workers do and remember this is a free service.

Some of the assistance provided includes a nurse, social worker, aid to assist with bathing and other needs, religious advisor and prescriptions.

Hiring caregivers

You can hire caregivers from an agency or on a freelance basis. Different individuals have different preferences. Personally, I prefer the freelance basis. That way if I don't feel an assignment is a good fit, I have the choice to say no thank you and walk away.

Other people swear by hiring someone from an agency. You have to decide what you prefer.

There are pros and cons to either choice. Research your options to find the solution that will best fit your circumstances.

With an agency, caregivers are:

- Licensed
- Bonded
- Insured
- Often have workman's compensation coverage

My best piece of advice is to interview the caregiver and make sure the individual is a good fit with you {you will essentially be the one in charge}, the person being cared for and the overall situation.

When you interview a prospective caregiver make sure you:

Make sure the caregiver's physical abilities match your needs

Define the duties and expectations of the job

Common feelings caregivers report:

- Grief and sadness
- Disappointment
- Fear and anxiety
- Embarrassment or shame
- Anger
- Guilt
- Feeling overwhelmed and alone
- Discomfort about the disease

Suggestions in coping with feelings:

- *Depression*--increase pleasant activities, especially social and physical activities
- *Grief and sadness*--increase pleasant activities and talk about your feelings with others
- *Embarrassment and shame*--talk with others who have been through a similar situation
- *Disappointment*--try to remain flexible and accept things that didn't go the way you had hoped they would
- *Fear and anxiety*--plan for the future, take concrete steps to face fears and alleviate anxiety
- *Anger*--get away from the situation and try again later, find someone to provide relief care so you can have time to yourself
- *Guilt*--talk with a friend, counselor or helping professional; guilt is particularly tricky because there is always more you can do--be realistic in deciding what constitutes doing enough
- *Overwhelmed*--get help, try to remember that the impaired person doesn't always have to come first, plan for times when you can rest and be alone

Why involve family and friends?

As much as we love the person we're caring for, we can't do it alone. Let go of some of that control and ask for help. Here are a few benefits:

- It helps your physical and mental health
- It's good for the patient to get used to other caregivers early on (it can be harder to introduce new caregivers later in the disease)
- A team approach decreases the burden of decision-making
- Family involvement can decrease misperceptions and fears about the disease and help everyone cope better

Before involving family and friends, decide on:

- What you want to accomplish
- What you need help with
- If you need regular meetings decide how often
- Be specific and direct about what you need

Things to take into consideration

Meet with an attorney to discuss a power of attorney {POA}, wills, living wills, health care preferences and other necessary information

Have a health care team you can rely on

Research nursing homes/assisted living facilities and know what's available {even if you choose not to use them}. Check with the state about complaints and ratings of those you are seriously considering.

Develop a network of support in family, friends, church family, other caregivers

Look into necessary services you may need such as: transportation, meal and chore services, handyman services, doctors that might make house calls or will work with your specific needs

Other services to familiarize yourself with: Area Agency on Aging, local hospitals, adult day care centers, meals on wheels, church and community groups, private agencies, hospice, Alzheimer's Association, Senior Information and Assistance Services, Medicare/Medicaid, State agencies.

Caring for your own health

While caring for your loved one, you need to also care for your own health. Many caregivers do not do this. Often a caregiver will die before or shortly after the person they are giving care to {especially if the caregiver has a health problem}. Take care of yourself. Some of the things you want to avoid are:

- Stress
- Insomnia
- Substance abuse

Make sure you find time to

- Exercise
- Take time for yourself
- Socialize
- Eat healthy

As a caregiver your roles are changing. Your parents raised you when you were a child. Now you are caring for your parents as they grow older.

Concerns:

Caregiving is very stressful and you will see a lot of changes. These are not always often to deal with. Just know that it's okay to struggle with these change. Just make sure that you work through your concerns and don't keep it bottled up.

As you parent grows older, you will find that there are things they can no longer do. Maybe they can't drive any longer or make decisions for themselves.

Your heart will hurt at these changes. Allow yourself the right to grieve and be angry. Realize your parent will have the same feelings and give them the space to also grieve and work through their loss.

You may also feel overwhelmed and resentful towards your new responsibility. That's fine, but don't take it out on the person you're caring for.

Things you can do

There are some things you can do to keep from feeling overwhelmed:

- Make a list of what needs to be done
- Determine how often each item/chore needs to be done
- Talk with other caregivers to determine what works or doesn't work for them
- Allow others to help

Other Tips

- Allow the patient to do what s/he is capable of {help if needed}
- Realize that as the patient gets older or progresses in the disease, the ability to reason begins to diminish
- Don't assume the patient understands you or your feelings
- Often all the patient has to think about is themselves and/or their needs
- Take time to laugh

- Watch your tone and attitude when dealing with the patient
- Maintain a daily routine, if and when possible
- Accept the loved one as they are
- Don't try to argue or reason with the person when you disagree {especially when dementia and Alzheimer's are the diagnosis. They do not have this capability}
- Join a support group

Warning Signs of Burnout for Caregivers

Caregivers often get burned out. We are often caring around the clock for ourselves and {at least} one other individual. Some signs of burnout are:

- Excessive stress and tension
- Debilitating depression
- Persistent anxiety, anger, or guilt
- Extreme irritability or anger with the patient
- Decreased overall life satisfaction
- Relationship conflicts and social isolation
- Lower immunity and greater need for healthcare services
- Excessive use of medications, drugs, or alcohol
- Inability to concentrate
- Mood swings
- Loneliness
- Exhaustion

Physical warning signs of burnout:

- Stooped posture
- Sweaty palms
- Tension headaches
- Neck pain
- Chronic back pain
- Chronic fatigue
- Weight gain or loss
- Problems with sleep

Behavioral warning signs of burnout:

- Overreacting
- Acting on impulse
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawing from relationships
- Changing jobs often

What you can do to combat burnout

There are things you can do to combat this burnout:

- Listen to music
- Read
- Take time to exercise {even if it's mini-workouts throughout the day}
- Take time to play
- Try something new
- Set boundaries
- Laugh
- Ask for help
- Get out of the house
- Find a relaxing hobby {ex. Gardening, etc}
- Keep positive attitude
- Keep a journal of your feelings and thoughts
- Count your blessings
- See a movie
- Practice relaxation techniques {ex. Deep breathing, yoga, etc}
- Learn stress management skills
- Scrapbook
- Accept the situation and realize you can't control everything
- Accept help from others

Dealing with Depression

Depression is very common among caregivers

Some signs are:

- Feeling tired most of the time
- Feeling overwhelmed and irritable

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy

Can Caregiver Stress Affect My Health

- If you don't take care of yourself it can
- More likely to be obese
- Higher risk of mental decline
- Weaker immune system
- Higher level of stress hormones
- Higher chance of long term medical illness such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes or arthritis

Make sure you see a doctor on a regular basis. If you can't find one search for a free clinic

Other ways to reduce stress

- Ask for help
- Ask family members to help you {whether with care or financially}
- Say no to draining request {hosting the holidays, company, etc}
- Don't try to be perfect
- Don't feel guilty
- Set realistic goals
- Make lists and prioritize
- Stay in touch with friends and family
- Join a support group
- Make time for yourself each week
- Stay physically active

Connecting with the Patient

Put yourself in his/her shoes—try to understand the limitations and what the loved one is feeling

Celebrate their achievements—acknowledge and celebrate the small day to day abilities and challenges that are accomplished

Understand—understand what your loved one is going through; don't push them to do things beyond their capabilities

Find nonverbal ways to communicate—let the person know you care through a hand on the shoulder, alternatives for communication, looking into their eyes, remaining calm, other ways to soothe or touch, etc.

Taking a Break

We all need a break and there are options. Some of these are:

Adult day cares—many community centers offer these. Visit to find out what they offer and a schedule that might suit you and your loved one

Day hospitals—provide medical care during the day and the loved one returns home in the evening

In-home respite—there are many agencies you can research that provide these services

Short Term Respite—many nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospice provide short term care in their facility. This is great if you need a week to just get away, go on vacation or for emergencies. Research your options in advance.

Struggles of Caregiving

Watching a parent age is very difficult. Gradually the parent loses his/her ability to do many things. This can include:

- Loss of strength—maybe you have to open medicine bottles now, drink tops, etc.
- Loss of memory—the memory begins to go and your loved one no longer remembers certain events. The hardest thing is when the loved one no longer remembers you.
- Loss of independence—unable to drive, need help with bathing, etc.
- Loss of dignity—needs help with bathing and toiletry. You may have to change their underwear while in bed. Take every effort to help your loved one keep their dignity. Don't put them down. Refer to it as underwear instead of a diaper.

Creating Memories

Whether suffering from dementia/Alzheimer's or not, the memory begins to wane with age.

- Keep pictures around the house
- You may want to make a picture calendar, place mats, collage, etc.
- Place reminders of favorite activities, sports and hobbies
- Use music to unlock the secrets buried deep within

Working for a family

- Be compassionate
- Show respect
- If your opinion is asked, share in a non-confrontational manner but remember the final decision is not yours

- Honor decisions made, even if you don't agree
- Don't tell family members they need to do such and such for their loved one

Dementia

Dementia slowly eradicates the loved ones memory. This is very hard to handle and deal with, especially when they ask 'who are you'.

My Grandfather would ask where his siblings or parents were. We'd answer "at work", "at home", "they'll be here later." These are considered therapeutic lies. Why tell the person "they're dead" and upset them. If asked specifically "Is Grandma in heaven" then you can be honest and say "yes."

Find ways to keep aides around the house to help them remember. Technology today makes it easy to have coffee mugs with pictures, calendar's with pictures, collages, even cards with family pictures and you could play a memory game.

Other things to help the patient work their brain cells:

- Cross word puzzles
- Jigsaw Puzzles
- Sudoku
- Timelines
- Review your family tree, places lived, etc.
- Prompt with Bible Verses or poems that have been memorized
- Music
- Board games
- Coloring
- Create memory books
- Wrap change
- Sort socks, silverware, etc.
- Play pets
- Write letters
- Listen to books on CD
- Play with pets

- Water plants
- Play with clay/dough/silly putty
- Put items in a bag to pull out and talk about
- Toss a ball
- Dance
- Clip coupons

Giving up independence

Giving up your independence is very difficult. The person is finding that they are unable to do things they've been doing on their own for most of their life.

- Put yourself in their position and imagine how you would feel.
- Try to be understanding
- Do whatever possible to make the transition smooth
- Show respect

Dealing with other people

Often everyone else thinks they know best. All they know is what they see or are told. Maybe there are financial or scheduling issues others know nothing about. Sometimes the primary caregiver receives so much advice that we find ourselves resentful. Just remember that they mean best and thank the person. Think about the suggestion and if the advice will help your situation in any way. Sometimes two minds are better than one and you get suggestions you never considered. Other times the person is just interfering or the suggestion isn't possible. Only you know, but remember to be kind.

One the other hand if you are the one offering advice, try not to step on toes. Don't get offended if your advice is not heeded. As long as your friend is not being neglected, just remember that you shared what was on your heart. Your friend is the caregivers mother/father/sibling/other relation and hopefully the caregiver will do everything in his/her power to provide the best care. If you don't agree with something there's no need in being confrontational about the matter. Offer your thoughts in a calm manner and then let it go.

Nursing/retirement homes

The time may come when you need to put your loved one in a nursing home or retirement facility. Visit around, do your research and consult your budget. Make sure that you pick a facility where both you and your loved one will feel comfortable and able to get involved. Check with your state about ratings, complaints, etc.

Make sure you allow your loved one to visit the facility, meet the people, see the activities schedule and that you get his/her feedback. Remember s/he will be the one that will be living there.

Moving in with you

The time may come when you need to move a parent or loved one in with you. Talk with your spouse and children about the situation. You need to take the feelings of anyone living with you into consideration. Do you have room in your house?

The lady I sit with is in a basement apartment of her daughter's house. That works because she has her own personal space. When her daughter is off she can go upstairs for a break.

Will the loved one be right there all the time? Where will you go when you need to get away? Will the loved one have their own room or space? Remember s/he will also want/need their own space.

This isn't a lighthearted decision to make. You will need to talk with everyone involved about all aspects of this situation. Don't forget to pray about the best solution for you and your family.

Items you might need

There are some things you might need eventually:

- Walker
- Cane
- Wheelchair
- Shower Chair
- Lifeline or Emergency Response System
- Hospital bed
- Beside Commode
- Intercom system in the house
- Webcam to watch from another part of the house

How can others assist?

- Pray daily for homebound person and caregiver
- Offer transportation to doctor appointments
- Offer to pick up and take home for church
- Make weekly phone calls
- Send cards to say “thinking of you”
- Visit regularly with treats {fruit basket, coffee, sweets, news, etc}
- Read to the person or offer audiobooks {many libraries have these}
- Offer to assist with letters or cards need to write
- Prepare weekly meals
- Offer to visit/sit and relieve caregiver
- Volunteer to help with housework, handyman services, lawn care, etc.
- Make sure there is a working telephone system in place
- Take a copy of the bulletin and DVD of the service

Protecting

As caregivers we want the best for our loved one. This includes their protection. As we grow older the ability to fall become more likely. Different circumstances also bring on other concerns.

You may want to:

- Get a lifeline
- Call to check on each day
- Have a neighbor or family member check on each day

How do I pay for home health care?

- Medicare and Medicaid will cover some services such as hospice, nursing facilities, etc.
- Private insurance
- Investments
- Sell of home or additional property{s}
- Long term care policy

*check with the providers and your financial advisor for your options

Benefits of being a Caregiver

While caregiving is very demanding and selfless work, there are some benefits:

- Feel good about self
- See life in a more positive light
- Realize how fleeting life is
- Live life to the fullest

Allow Yourself to Grieve

Your loved one will slowly decline and be able to do less than before. During these changes you will find yourself grieving, just as you will when death claims the patient. Allow yourself to work through the grief process and seek counseling if needed. I've listed the five stages of grief here:

1. Shock and Denial—you don't want to accept the decline or loss; possibly the change is so sudden you're in shock
2. Anger—you find yourself angry at the changes in your loved one and situation. Your heart grieves for them.
3. Bargaining—you want to bargain with God or someone to make things better.
4. Depression—you're depressed over the changes
5. Acceptance and Hope—you come to terms and accept the change or loss

The information included in this booklet is in no way conclusive. There are numerous other issues that should be discussed and considered. This is to just give you a broad overview of the responsibility necessary to care for an aging loved one. If you are moving into this new territory I strongly encourage you to research and seek out various options and alternatives. This will assist you in making a more informed decision. Listed below are a list of resources and scripture verses that I hope will be a help to you.

Resources:

National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA)

1-800-896-3650

www.nfcacares.org

Children of Aging Parents (CAPS)

1-800-227-7294

www.CAPS4caregivers.org

U.S. Administration on Aging Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116

www.aoa.gov

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

1-800-633-4227

Family Caregiver Alliance

1-800-455-8106

www.womenshealth.gov

1-800-944-9662

www.webmd.com

Recommended Books:

When Your Aging Parents Need Care: Practical Help For This Season of Life
by Candy Arrington and Kim Atchley

When God Comes Near by Marcia Gaddis

Scripture

“Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:12

“Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” 1 Chronicles 29:12-13

“For the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10

*“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”
Psalm 4:8*

“Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:10

“Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.” Psalm 30:5

“O Lord, restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Psalm 51:12

“Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught.” Psalm 55:1-2

“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid.” Psalm 56:3-4

“Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you O Lord; your right hand upholds me.” Psalm 63:7

“Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.” Psalms 86:4

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all Matildaerations, Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Psalm 90:1-2

“Lord, open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” Psalm 119:18.

“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted.”
Isaiah 66:13

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1
Corinthians 10:31

“Love is patient, love is kind. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:4, 13

“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1
Corinthians 15:57