

"I have been taking care of my father for three years. I didn't realize how intense and lonely it would be. I'm way over my head, but I can't bear to take him to a nursing home."

Recognizing My Own Limitations

Caring for someone can be a challenging and lonely undertaking. Many caregivers experience frustration, anger, impatience, and/or loneliness. These feelings may indicate that something needs to change.

Recognizing how much you can do is the first step to managing the situation. And having a plan of action for seeking help will assist you in providing the best possible care.

Acknowledging your limits helps to define how much care you can provide before additional or full-time help is needed. For example, your limits might be when the care receiver needs care 24-hours a day, becomes incontinent, or requires lifting. Other examples of when to ask for help might be when caregiving interferes with your emotional and physical health, family relationships, or employment.

Setting and honoring your limits will help guide and balance your role as a caregiver. Start by asking yourself, what limits do I need to set or reinforce?

Making a Plan

After acknowledging your limits, it is important to make a plan.

What can you and others do to help the caregiving transitions go more smoothly?

If appropriate, ask the care receiver and others involved in the caregiving process to give input into the plan.

Begin by making a list of tasks that are beyond your limitations. List them in the space below. Then, think of family members, friends or local services for each task.

What care is needed?

Who can help?

Think about the limits and “what ifs” you may experience in the future. For example, what if the care receiver can no longer live alone?

Make a list of the “what ifs” and an action plan to help with those transitions you might experience in the future.

When this happens...

I/we will...

When this happens...

I/we will...

When this happens...

I/we will...

Knowing your limits and having a plan for seeking help can reduce some of the challenges you face as a caregiver. Being proactive can ease the stress of feeling overwhelmed and alone.

For more information, read/contact:

How to Care for Aging Parents- 3rd Edition, by Virginia Morris, Workman Publishing Company, 2014.

- AARP
1-800-424-3410

www.aarp.org

This tip sheet is part of a series:

Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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