

5 TIPS for caregivers

FOR CAREGIVERS, FROM CAREGIVERS

It's easy to say to someone, you should do this, or have you considered that? But until we've walked a mile in their shoes, it's impossible to be truly empathetic. We know that every case of dementia is a little different, but no one knows better than other caregivers what caregivers are going through. With each new season new stresses are upon us, so hopefully these 5 tips from caregivers for caregivers will help make your day a little less stressful!

1 QTIPs aren't just for cleaning your ears.

If you remember nothing else about caregiving advice, try to heed this one acronym: Quit Taking It Personally. This is certainly easier said than done - especially when caring for someone you're close to such as a spouse or parent. But remember, their behavior isn't a reflection of your relationship; it is most likely a means of communication. It is probably a message of I'm tired, I'm hungry, I don't feel well, I don't understand what's going on, or any other host of concerns. When you're tired or hungry, do you love your spouse any less? No! You're just ready for a nice nap or that steak dinner you've been waiting for all day. Try not to take their actions personally, and remember it's often just a way of communicating needs.

2 Find your own comfort.

As a caregiver, a lot of your role revolves around making your loved one comfortable. Making a favorite meal (or at least something they'll eat!), playing a favorite song (or something to bring back memories), or getting them comfortable in bed are common tasks. But when is the last time you've done any of these things for yourself? Even if you can't manage it all the time, make sure you include some time for your own favorites too. Make your favorite side dish with the meal, or throw a few of your beloved songs on the playlist. Taking time to make you both more comfortable is a win for everyone.

3 Find a little humor in your day.

It can be hard to see the glass as half full, when your day has started with battles with your loved one over getting up and getting dressed, not eating breakfast, and refusing their meds. You finally get some clothes on them, and they end up going to the grocery store with you in a polka dot shirt and plaid pants. There are two ways you can handle the situation. You can stomp through the store, frustrated that they've moved the canned peaches again, trying to get in and out before anyone sees your spouse in such a ridiculous outfit.

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Quit Taking It Personally.*

Or you can remind yourself that your loved one is clean, warm and at least fully dressed, give them their favorite striped hat to wear, and chuckle to yourself about their wonderful (lack of) fashion sense.

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4 Find support in your caregiving role.

It's so easy when you're caught up in your caregiving role to assume all the responsibilities yourself. This shirt has to be ironed a certain way, and put in the closet in a certain place. How many times have you said to yourself, "No one else will do it right," or "It's quicker/easier/better to just do it myself." And this may in fact be true, but is it worth your own health? You need support in your caregiving role too. A support group is a great place to meet people in similar circumstances, and learn new strategies for caregiving. A day center can provide a safe place for your loved one during the day while you take care of your daily tasks. Home care can be a way to help provide your loved one care that has become too challenging. And if they put the shirt in the wrong place? At least it's clean and in the closet.

5 Patience, patience, patience.

Maybe you've forgotten the full QTIP acronym already, how about just one word to remember: patience. Yes, some days will be trying. Your loved one is asking the same question over and over, and you feel like there are only so many more times you'll be able to respond calmly. Take a step back and remember your patience. It will help you in the grocery store when your loved one is sporting a new fashion trend. Patience will help when they want to play the same song over and over. Patience will help you adjust to a new caregiver at home, or a new routine with day care. Remember the reasons you started caregiving in the first place, and hopefully that will help bring YOU patience.



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