

Timely Tips for Caregivers

1. **Get help with tasks and chores early on in the illness** – your loved one will get used to having people around the home.
2. Choose to **take charge of your life**, and don't let your loved one's illness or disability always take centre stage.
3. **Involve other members of your family from the beginning** of the illness – even if you are the only one who sees the changes which are taking place – pass these on as information only – not as a debating issue.
4. **Educate yourself.** Access all the information you can about the illness and educate yourself as much as possible about its progression – disease-specific organizations, your doctor, and the public library, for example, are resources for information.
5. **Forgive yourself** for not being perfect. You're doing a very hard job and you deserve some quality time, just for you.
6. **Make friends with your family physician** and ask for time to speak with him/her alone – if you need to.
7. **Watch out for signs of depression**, and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
8. When people offer help, **accept the offer** and suggest things that they can do.
9. There is a difference between caring and doing. **Be open to technologies and ideas** that promote your loved one's independence.
10. **Trust your instincts.** Most of the time they will lead you in the right direction.
11. **Seek support** from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
12. **Get regular physical check-ups, eat a balanced diet and try to take time out to express sadness, anger and helplessness.** Accept yourself for being human and try to do at least one things that you enjoy every day.
13. **Stand up for your rights** as a caregiver and a citizen.

Caregiver Bill of Rights

I have the right to . . .

. . . take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my relative or friend.

. . . seek help from others even though my relative or friend may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.

. . . maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things for myself.

. . . get angry, be depressed and express other difficult feelings occasionally.

. . . reject any attempts by my relative or friend (either conscious or unconscious) to manipulate me through guilt and/or depression.

. . . receive consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance for what I do for my relative as long as I offer these qualities in return.

. . . take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my relative or friend.

. . . protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me in the time when my relative or friend no longer needs my full-time help.

. . . expect and demand that as new strides are made in finding resources to aid physically and mentally impaired persons in our country, similar strides will be made towards aiding and supporting Caregivers.