

Strategies to be a Successful Caregiver

As the Caregiver for someone living with a chronic condition, you have accepted the responsibility of putting another person's needs above your own. This is an incredible task to take on. Your amount of love and commitment for this person should make you feel good about yourself.

But you may also feel overwhelmed. Caring for someone else, no matter the reason you do it, is not always easy.

As you work to make someone else's life a little more comfortable, here are some strategies that may help.

First, take care of yourself both physically and emotionally. This may be the first thing you forget to do as you deal with the challenges of caring for a loved one. But it is also the most important. You will not be able to effectively care for your loved one if you are not feeling healthy yourself.

Make sure you make healthy food choices, include exercise in your daily routine and get a good night's sleep.

When you need an emotional break don't feel guilty about it. Ask someone else to relieve you every now and then so you can focus on yourself in order to recharge. You want to be the best caregiver for your loved one and that means you need to take some time to relax and recharge.

If you don't know anyone that can help, talk to your loved one's healthcare provider. They can give you some resources to use in order to get the support you need.

Throughout the caregiving process, be patient. This is a journey you are taking together and there will be good days and bad days. Accept both and learn from them. Think about what works, what doesn't work and what you can do to ensure there are more good days than bad.

Be a good listener. It will be easier to understand what works well if you listen to your loved one.

It will also help to take some time to learn all you can about the condition your loved one is living with. You do not have to become an expert overnight, but it is helpful to know what you can expect in both the short-term and the long-term, so you can provide safe care.

Take note though, different diseases can affect people differently. Get to know how the illness affects your loved one specifically so you can better care for them day to day and support your loved one through any healthcare decisions.

Depending on the level of care your loved one needs, in many cases you may become their advocate. This means that when talking to the healthcare team you can speak up for the patient and ensure that any treatments,

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medications, or appointments are in their best interest. With a greater understanding of the condition you will feel confident that you are being the best advocate you can be.

Besides the healthcare team, there are other resources you can use to help you learn and understand the condition. The internet is a great resource. Just be careful that you are looking at sites that have been reviewed by medical experts. There is a lot of misinformation out there and you need to trust your source to ensure the safety of the care you are giving.

And finally, find support for yourself. You may focus so much on what your loved one needs that you forget you are going through this journey as well. Talking to others who are in a similar situation can help.

Being a caregiver for a loved one who is living with a chronic condition can be challenging.

Remember to:

Take care of yourself first. Make sure both your physical and emotional needs are met so you don't burn out. Be patient. Be a good listener. Learn all you can about the condition. Advocate for your loved one. And find support for yourself.

The care you give your loved one should make you feel good about yourself. You have made a commitment to take this personal journey with them and steer them through the ups and downs. Accept the bad days, but embrace the good – together.