



STAGES of SENIOR CARE

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Making the Best Decisions

by Paul and Lori Hogan

Chapter 2: Advice for Caregivers

Since no organization has more experience with the elder population--individuals age 50 and older--than the forty-million-member AARP, we asked AARP president Jennie Chin Hansen, a nurse, to give us her thoughts on caregiving. Her response follows.

- **Prepare intellectually.** Make sure you have information that will help you be as capable a caregiver as possible. There are many resources available, including websites and books.
- **Consider the emotions.** There is an emotional side to caregiving. Often you begin to change roles with the person who might have cared for you at one time. Once the child, the cared-for, now the carer. That can be a big shift.
- **The physical aspect.** Then there's the physical side. Bookmark space to take care of yourself. This is a necessity. We often do and do and then don't recognize we are exhausted and, thus, more prone to our own illness.
- **It's a journey.** While caregiving can be a new life journey and an important discovery, it can also be frustrating. You may need to connect and share with other people in similar circumstances, either in person or on social networking websites for caregivers. You have to understand how you feel or think. You should not feel guilty when you get angry, because these things are part of the normal course.
- **Some should not.** It may be that some people shouldn't be caregivers if, for example, they've had a rough earlier relationship with the person who needs care. You have to know what is best for you and the individual. It may be safer emotionally, physically, and economically not to become the caregiver so that you don't find that you have done something unintentionally you'll regret later.
- **Incredible positives.** Finally, there are incredible potential positives about caregiving. It may be an opportunity to get to a new place in your relationship together and see that person and yourself in a way that you will always treasure as part of the life cycle of our humanity.

In the end, what matters most is that you are kind to yourself and your elder in this vital life stage. Caring is not just a function, it's a state of being, whether we are young or old.

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