



Top 10 Things Caregivers Should Do

A practical, compassionate guide for every family navigating the caregiving journey.

"Cherish the season of caregiving — it is the final gift."

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First Things First

1. Get Educated Early and Create a Care Plan



Learn as much as possible about your loved ones' medical conditions, medications, and daily needs. Begin attending doctor visits and making 3-way calls with the doctor and your loved one. Ask doctors or nurses to explain treatment plans.

Plug into your church or where people of your faith gather. They may have medical ministries or a network of people specifically interested in senior care and eldercare planning. Attend caregiver workshops (local hospitals, AARP, or the Alzheimer's Association often offer them).

Use reputable sources like **Caregiver Action Network** or **Family Caregiver Alliance**.

Write out the day-to-day tasks, routines, and responsibilities. Include:

Medical appointments, medication schedules, medication list and dosage, allergies, particularly to medication. Use Google Drive or Dropbox to share with trusted family members.

Emergency contacts and backup caregivers

Home safety checklist (fall risks, lighting, accessibility, alarm system codes)

2. Have "The Talk" about Finances and Legal Matters

Before a crisis hits, discuss:

Legal documents: power of attorney, healthcare proxy, living will.

Finances: income, insurance, expenses, and access to accounts.



Consider consulting an eldercare law attorney or a less expensive alternative such as the Wealth Transfer Alliance (WTA). WTA is an innovative and affordable elder care planning online platform that guides you through will and trust development and more, to ensure everything is properly set up.

3. Be Proactive about Final Wishes



Don't wait until someone is sick or advancing in age:

Meet with a funeral planning advisor to discuss cost of funeral arrangements.

Help with developing a budget, exploring payment plans, determining if pre-need insurance or trusts to pay for the funeral or memorial service.

4. Organize Important Documents



Keep key papers together in a binder or digital folder (fireproof and waterproof) and let trusted family members know the location:

Medical records

Insurance policies

Legal documents

5. Build a Support Network



Don't try to do everything yourself.

Reach out to siblings, relatives, church members, or neighbors.

Join caregiver support groups—online or local—so you can share experiences and advice.

Ask for specific help ("Can you pick up groceries on Tuesdays?" instead of "Can you help me?").

6. Take Care of Your Own Health

Caregiver burnout is real.

Schedule **regular breaks** and **respite care** when needed.

Keep up with your own medical checkups, sleep, and exercise.

Use stress-management tools like journaling, prayer, and counseling.



7. Use Available Community Resources



There are programs that can lighten the load:

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) for local senior services

Meals on Wheels, adult day programs, or home health aides

Grants or benefits through **Medicare, Medicaid, or VA programs**

8. Set Boundaries and Communicate Clearly



Define what you can and cannot do.

Be honest with family members about limits.

Use family meetings or shared calendars to coordinate care.

Avoid guilt—boundaries protect both you and your loved one.

9. Plan for Emergencies



Keep an emergency plan visible and up to date:

Doctor and hospital contacts

List of allergies, medications, and conditions

Names and contact details of people who will support you during emergencies and hospital stays.
Someone to relieve you or to take shifts during hospital stays

A "go bag" with essentials (copies of IDs, insurance cards, extra clothes, medications)

10. Recognize the Emotional Journey

Caregiving can bring grief, frustration, love, and purpose all at once.

Allow yourself to feel those emotions.

Celebrate small victories and meaningful moments.

Seek counseling or caregiver coaching if you feel overwhelmed.

Cherish the season of caregiving because it is the final gift.



Advance Directive Checklist



Before You Begin:

- Identify someone you trust as your Health Care Agent
- Discuss your medical values and wishes with them
- Download or print the D.C. Advance Directive form

Part 1: Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

- Fill in your full name, address, and date of birth
- Name your primary Health Care Agent
- Provide their phone and email
- Name an alternate agent (optional)
- Add any limits to their authority (optional)

Part 2: Declaration of Advance Instructions (Living Will)

Choose and check your preferences for:

- Life-sustaining treatments
- CPR / Do-Not-Resuscitate
- Mechanical ventilation
- Feeding tube and IV fluids
- Pain management/comfort care
- Organ donation
- Spiritual or cultural wishes (optional)

Part 3: Signatures

- You sign and date the form
- Two witnesses sign (not your agent or caregivers)

Part 4: Store and Share

- Give a copy to your Health Care Agent
- Give copies to family members
- Upload to your medical portal if available
- Keep one accessible at home
- Review every 1–2 years

Having this checklist is a great start to a complex process. For additional information and guidance on your caregiving journey, go to www.thecaregiverlink.com