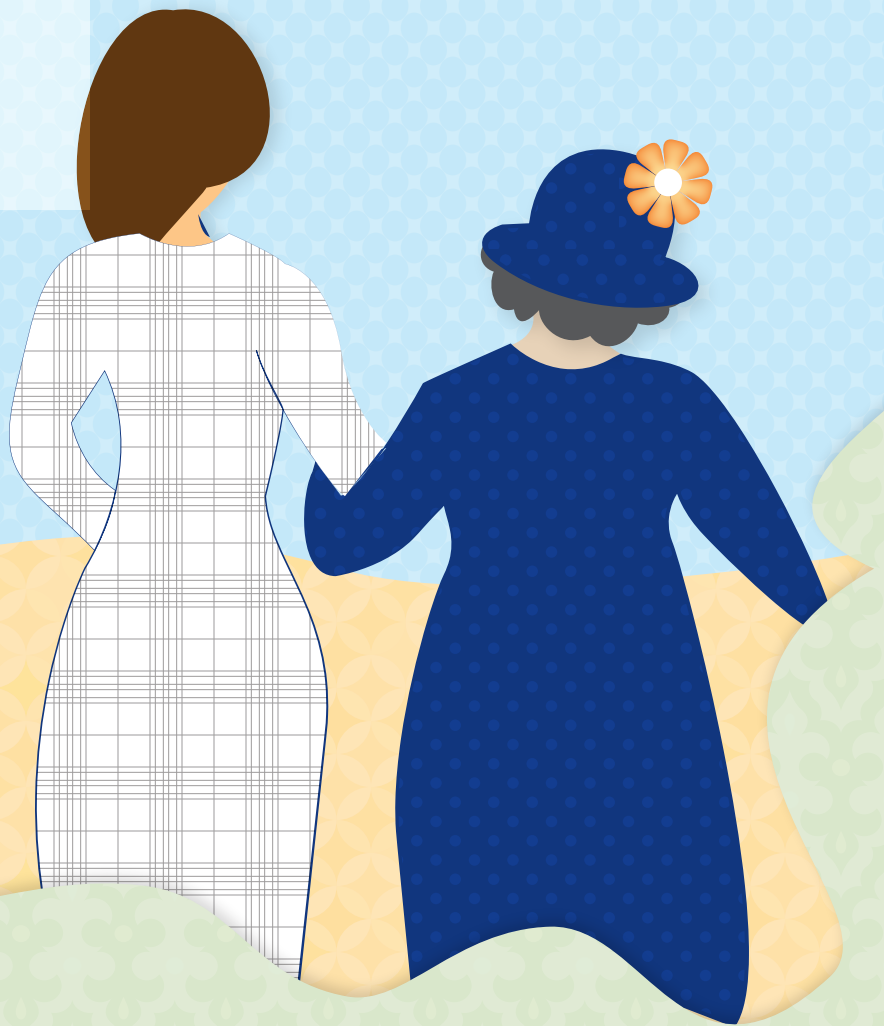




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# How to care for yourself while caring for others



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## INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER 1: The Social Trends

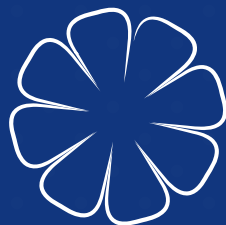
### CHAPTER 2: New Caregivers

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### How Will You Care for You?



## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps you are doing an effective job of looking after your own health and well-being while providing loving care for an aging parent or a loved one. You might even do all of that while excelling at your career and being a great parent to your children. If any of the above are true, wonderful! You are managing to juggle all the important areas of your life successfully.

As the aging population in North America grows, there will be an increasing need for home care. Governments and public authorities are getting prepared to handle the oncoming demand. Families are realizing the need to care for aging members of their families.

Whether you are an old-hand in providing care or new to the role of caregiving and are seeking information on how to be a positive contributor to the life of your loved one, while maintaining a balance in your own life, this e-book is for you. We'll discuss many ways for you to go beyond the basics to make a difference in your own and your loved one's lives.

### In the following chapters, you'll learn about:

- Current trends in aging population and beyond the “grey tsunami”
- Strategies for those who are new to the role of caregiving
- How you can go about asking for help
- How to care for yourself

## CHAPTER 1:

### The Social Trends: **Beyond the “Grey Tsunami”**

The shock of the new era will soon wear off. The “grey tsunami” will no longer be a surprise. We will come to accepting our new reality and will be looking for constructive and positive approaches to enjoying our new lives. If it is not already the case, soon we will all have aging parents or partners to take care of. The question is how do we match our frame of mind to the new conditions and look for the **positives**.

#### What are some of the key social trends?

##### —Age

The population is aging. A longer life-span can mean many more productive and satisfying years. It can also mean years of illness, frailty, and dependence.

##### —Care at Home

Long-term care is often assumed to be nursing home care, however research shows that the majority of long-term care for older people is provided at home by family members.

##### —Gender

Women, the traditional providers of family care, are now in the paid workforce in greater numbers. Only about 40% of all adult caregivers are men. Women continue to provide most of the day-to-day personal and household care. Half of family caregivers are employed full- or part-time.

##### —Technology

Multitudes of ground breaking technologies are now available to ease the challenge of in home care, and more are being developed as we speak. The rate of technology adoption has been surprisingly high. The benefits are easy to find.

This change won't be easy for everyone. Some remain resistant to the new realities and fail at organizing a new setup to meet the needs of their loved ones. While others embrace the new changes and skilfully navigate to a new working arrangement.

So where do you fit in? How prepared are you in meeting the new demands on your life? Make a pact with yourself to find a better balance between caring for others and caring for you. Let's take a closer look at how.

## CHAPTER 2:

### Are You New to Caregiving?

If in 2011 you found yourself in the role of a caregiver for the first time, you are in good company. Last year the oldest baby boomers reached retirement age of 65. In the following years an increasing number of the population in North America and across the world will move into their later stages of life. Many more of your friends, family and other members of your community will be called upon to provide care in one form or another.

#### What are the key strategies for approaching your new role?

##### 1 SEE THE SIGNS

The first signs that your loved ones need help can be subtle. You may notice them before they do. Here are some of the signals that your loved one may be in need of more care than before. Watch for these signs and be prepared to talk to your loved one about them.

- Untidy house
- Missing important appointments
- Difficulty with sitting up or balancing when walking
- Uncertainty and confusion when performing once-familiar tasks
- Forgetfulness
- Expired food in the fridge
- Noticeable decline in grooming habits
- Mood swings or out-of-character behaviour
- Medication has not been taken on time
- Weight loss

Research shows that in most cases the warning signs are around for a long time before the individual or those around them accept to notice the signs and finally take proactive action to address the situation. Be quick to observe, accept and move into action, if any of these signs are consistently present.

## 2 HAVE THE CONVERSATION WITH YOUR LOVED ONE

If you've noticed the warning signs consistently, it is time to start talking with your loved one. But how do you bring up sensitive subjects related to aging, such as the need for home care?

Approach your loved ones with consideration. Discuss what you've observed and ask them what they think is happening. If your loved one acknowledges the situation, ask what they think would be good solutions. If they don't recognize a problem, use concrete examples to bring their attention to the situation.

Adopt a respectful approach to the conversation. Put yourself in your loved ones' shoes and think of how you would want to be addressed in this situation. Give them time to come into terms with the evidence. It might take a number of discussions.

## 2 CONNECT WITH OTHERS

With the focus of care being on your loved one, you can easily forget yourself in the equation. Take the time to reflect on your own feelings and thoughts. Connect with others in your family and community to talk about your experience. Devise a plan to create a support system to enable you to move forward with strength as you figure out and plan a way to navigate to a new arrangement that works for everyone.

## CHAPTER 3:

### Asking for Help

Asking family and friends for help can be an awkward and difficult thing to do. In fact, many caregivers avoid asking for help and end up trying to do everything themselves. You may find that once you take the step and ask someone for help, it is much easier than you expected. Often, family members and friends are willing, but don't know how to help.

#### Tips for asking family members or friends for help

##### —Pick the right time

Find a good time to sit down with them in person or find a quiet time to speak on the phone; a time and space where you can have their attention.

##### —Communicate the need

When you meet, review the list of your loved one's needs. Explain the current environment and what is and is not working.

##### —Make it personal

Give some thought to how they might be able to help based on your knowledge of their skills, availability, schedule, location and other considerations. Specifically discuss areas in which you think they could help. Inquire whether they would like to help out in other areas.

##### —Just ask

Ask them if they would like to participate. People often want to help but don't know how. Often there are ways to contribute with limited time and effort, but in a way that makes a significant difference to the recipient of care.

##### —Coordinate activities

You may also want to keep to a flexible agreement where on a day-to-day basis you identify the tasks that you need help with and they can sign-up to assist. Once you have secured the support of a number of contributors, you will need a way to easily communicate needed care and coordinate everyone's contribution.

Checkout **Caregaroo's Scheduler** as an easy tool to assist you with this step.

## CHAPTER 4:

### Take Care of You

You are now in the role of a caregiver for your loved one, as well as a spouse, parent, sibling, son, daughter and many other roles you may be filling. It may be a challenge to juggle all your responsibilities. Research has shown that people who care for others have a much higher risk of developing significant health problems. So, how can you take care of yourself while taking care of a loved one? Here is a checklist of things to consider in your quest to find a balance in your life.

#### 1 EXERCISE

You already know the benefits of exercising for your physical and psychological well-being. Exercising is a simple effective way to recharge your batteries and increase your ability to effectively handle the many demands on you. Keep in mind **a 30 minute walk every day is all you need** to maintain your level of fitness. If there was one tip to help you stick to your exercise plan, it would be to find an exercise buddy. Who can be your workout buddy?

#### 2 BRING BACK YOUR FAVOURITES

Think back prior to you becoming a caregiver- what did you enjoy that you miss doing now? Is there a way to still incorporate your interests? **Re-engaging in old hobbies** or going on outings with friends can make a world of difference. You may not be able to continue going on week-long vacations, but how about a cup of coffee or a quick trip over to a friend's house?

#### 3 TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

Keep your own doctor's appointments. As they say on flights, **"secure your oxygen mask, before helping others"**!

#### 3 MAKE TIME FOR A BREAK

There are many programs that provide respite care, or a break for caregivers, each week, so you can get your hair done, go to a movie with a friend, or go to the gym. Your local Area Agency on Aging may have resources to bring in a home attendant, or you may be able to place your family member in an adult day care program.



## 5 JOIN A CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Connecting with others in your situation can be the best way to manage your own emotions and prevent “burnout” and depression. If you can’t leave your family member at home, join a telephone support group –you can still have a strong connection to other caregivers without having to arrange more care.

## 6 JOIN THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

You will find many online communities around. There are many individuals like you who are willing to share their stories and provide advice to help you in your unique situation.

## 7 SET GOALS AND IDENTIFY MANAGEABLE STEPS

Setting goals or deciding what you would like to accomplish in the next three to six months is an important tool for taking care of yourself. Make sure the goals are specific and reachable. Break down each goal into smaller action steps. You are significantly more likely to reach your goal if you have identified manageable steps that you can put into action.

## CONCLUSION:

### How Will You Care for You?

There are plenty of ways to take charge of your role as a caregiver and contribute to the quality of life for your loved one while taking care of yourself.

Go ahead identify your goals and actionable steps now!

*Questions, comments or feedback for us? Please get in touch. We’d love to hear from you.*

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