



MY LOVED ONE NEEDS ME TO BE

THEIR CAREGIVER

Where do I start?



Caring for a family member or close friend is one of the most important roles you'll play. No matter where you are in the journey of family caregiving, having a good framework to help guide both you and your loved one will make the process easier. Below is a guide to assist you on your caregiving journey.

Start the conversation. Many people wait until a crisis occurs before they talk about their values and preferences, wishes for health care or details of their finances. If you wait until a fall, accident or serious diagnosis, big decisions may be driven by

assumptions. A lot of uncertainty can be avoided if you talk with your loved one before something happens. It's easy to put off these conversations because they can be difficult. You may be surprised to find your loved one has been meaning to have the talk, too.

Form your team. No one should try to approach the responsibility of caregiving alone. Trying to do everything yourself may lead to burnout and problems with your health and well-being. While other family members are likely sources of support, don't overlook friends, colleagues, clubs, or religious and other organizational affiliations as resources too.

Make a plan. Putting together a family caregiving plan now will help you respond more quickly and effectively should the need arise. It can also provide some peace of mind. A plan helps everyone get on the same page and keeps the focus on what's best for your loved one. The most effective family caregiving plans are made with the person you are caring for at the center of the discussion.

Find support. Many issues may arise during your caregiving experience that require additional information and resources. Don't hesitate to reach out to organizations and professionals with experience in helping, family caregivers such as local community resources and healthcare professionals.

Care for yourself. As a family caregiver, it's easy to forget about your own needs. Keeping up your energy and maintaining your health are critical in order to care for others.

Balancing caregiving with work and other family obligations can be stressful. It's just as important to make a plan to take care of yourself as it is to create a caregiving plan for others.

PREPARE TO CARE

Information provided by AARP