

7

Tips

for the

New Caregiver



caregiver.tips
MILLDENHALL

Save Time. Save Energy.

7 Tips for the New Caregiver



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Emergencies WILL happen; plan for what you can.

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Are they capable? Respect Privacy!

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What do you know about their health and healthcare needs?

4

What do you know about their finances?

3

What do you know about their future wishes?

2

Stay well.

1

Communication is key!



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Emergencies will happen, but plan for what you can....

What are the Signs a Senior May Need Some Help?

1. Changes in Physical Ability
2. Changes in Personal Hygiene
3. Changes in Mental Status/Confusion
4. Changes in Mood
5. Neglecting Household Duties
6. Difficulty with Finances
7. Injuries (e.g., unexplained cuts or bruises) or Damage to Property (e.g., dents in walls)



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Falls

Falls are very common as we age, and they significantly impact the ability of seniors to remain independent.

- One in four seniors over the age of 65 and one in three over age 75 will fall every year.
- 5-10% of falls will lead to a broken bone, head injury or major laceration.
- After a fall, many seniors will have a decline in their ability to function. For example, after a hip fracture, 25 to 75% will not recover to their preinjury level of functioning and independence.
- Many individuals, especially after a fall, report a fear of falling. Fear of falling was higher in those who lived alone, had cognitive impairment, depression, obesity, or mobility issues. Sadly, up to 60% will limit their activities due to a fear of falling; 15% will severely restrict their activities as a result.
- Rapid recovery was linked to individuals with mild or no disability prior to the fall.

Why is this important? We want to ensure that seniors do not make themselves MORE prone to falling by decreasing their mobility, becoming increasingly isolated, or decrease their mental abilities due to lack of stimulation

It is important to do 2 things:

1. screen for falls risk
2. maintain current physical abilities



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Screening for a Risk of a Fall

1. Has there been a recent fall? Near miss?
2. Were there injuries?
3. Are there new medical, medication, physical, mental status changes that increase/reduce the risk?
4. Is there a loss of confidence? Walking aids? Assistance in the house? Assistance outside the house? Physiotherapy? Occupational therapy? Installation of devices?
5. Has a home safety check been completed? Does it need to be redone? Are there specific seasonal needs?



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Emergency Planning - 'Just in Case'

When an emergency strikes, what will you need to stay organized?

1. Document Information about a senior that *you* may need in an emergency:

Full name	Date of birth
Citizenship/Residency	Location of important documents
Home address	Description (e.g., height, weight, hair & eye colour; attach recent photo)
Home phone	Business phone
Mobile phone	Email
Healthcare Provider and Contact Information	Support Worker/Housekeeper Contact
Close Contacts (contact info)	Duplicate keys location
Health care insurance	Car make, model, licence number, insurance
Condo/Apartment/Housing Contact (e.g., landlord, condo manager)	Alarm Code, Provider and Contact Information



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2. Information a SENIOR should have about YOU (and other Caregivers):

Discuss with the senior (or any healthcare or support workers assisting them in their home) the best way of keeping the information. It may be in paper form with a copy at home by their phone, in their wallet and in their vehicle; and/or in electronic form on a device and delivered by secure email.

- Full Name:
- Preferred way to be contacted:
- Home phone:
- Business phone:
- Mobile phone:
- Home Address:
- Email Address:
- Back up contacts if you are not available:



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3. Your own “In the Moment Kit” with useful items at hand for emergencies:

- Senior’s emergency information & medical information
- Notebook and pen to record important information; permanent marker for labels
- Your own emergency contact list (include supports for helping with business, childcare, eldercare, housekeeping duties)
- Devices, chargers, charging cords
- Books/distractions/meditation tapes
- Food, healthy snacks, water bottle
- Cash or credit/debit card for food, supplies, hospital charges
- Basic toiletries, (e.g., toothbrush/paste, contact lens backups or solutions, glasses, handwipes, earplugs, lip balm, hand cream, moisturizer, brush)
- Medications – prescriptions and common over the counter (e.g., Tylenol, Ibuprofen)
- Sweater or blanket/scarf
- Ziplocks and extra bags for belongings
- Change of clothes to be left in vehicle
- Keys (e.g., house, car)



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Is the Senior Capable?

Understanding Some Important Issues

- It is frustrating if the senior appears to be making certain kinds of decisions (e.g., financial, healthcare-related) and as a result, puts themselves at risk

BUT it is important to understand that:

- Capable people get to make their own wishes for future.
- Capable people also get to make their own choices, even poor choices.
- Capable – but for what? There are different tests depending on the type of capacity: treatment capacity, financial capacity or capacity to make other types of decisions such as housing. There is no blanket finding of incapacity.
- Capacity is presumed (assumed).
- Seek help if you think there is an issue.
 - Different locations have different rules; seek legal advice where the senior lives.
 - There are different types of capacity – for example treatment or financial.
 - There is no blanket finding of incapacity.
 - On-line resources may not be legally accurate – “buyer beware”.



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Privacy

Understanding Some Important Issues

1. Everyone has a basic right to privacy (with few exceptions, for example, where the law permits or requires information to be shared, including in situations where someone's safety is at risk).
2. You will need either the senior's consent or some other legal authority (e.g., if you are making their decisions for them) to access their personal health information, including engaging with their healthcare providers.
3. Be responsible with the information. Keep it secure, protected, and maintain confidentiality.
4. Keep the information updated and accurate.
5. Many seniors are very private. Assure them that the information is only used to support them in the future.



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What do you know about their health?

Important Documents List*

*Keep master copy in secure location with a backup copy for appointments

- Documents
 - Recent health information summary from doctor/primary care provider
 - Past medical history, operations,
 - Hospital discharge summaries, Clinic or Specialist notes
 - Copies of test results
- Updated list of medications,
 - Include medication name, dose and frequency
 - Recently changed medications
 - Over the counter medications, supplements
- Habits (alcohol, smoking, recreational drugs)
- Allergies and allergy alerts
- Healthcare insurance
 - Extended health care coverage
- Important contacts
- Legal Documents



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What do you know about their finances?

Complete a Quick Financial Check Up

Organize the many documents you will need in order to help support one or more aspects of the senior's life. Decide how best to securely store and access documentation. If done electronically, user names and password information should be stored in a secure, yet accessible location. Whether in paper or electronic form, the goal is to have a complete picture, that is available when you need it.

Include:

- Identification documents (e.g., birth certificate, marriage certificate, passport, SSN/SIN, Health Insurance, Driver's Licence, Permits)
- Key contacts (e.g., lawyer, accountant, bank, financial advisor)
- Legal documents
- Assets
- Employment and Pension Information
- Insurance
- Real Estate
- Banking and Credit Information
- Taxes
- Financial Plan
- Debts or Loans
- Funeral, Wills and Estate Plan
- Cashflow & Living Expenses
- Vehicles
- Charities
- Pet Information
- Computer, Phone, Mobile Device - access and backup
- Social media, subscription (electronic and paper), shopping sites
- Memberships (e.g., AAA/CAA, air, hotel, rail, travel, retail)



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Use this space for notes or to create a 'To Do' list.

Where will you most likely locate this important documentation? (e.g., electronic or paper)

Will you need permission to contact key individuals or organizations to complete this list? Verbal or written? If Yes, can it be done over the phone or must it be in writing or in person?



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What do you know about their wishes/preferences for where?

1. Encourage the senior to talk about what they would like for future regarding healthcare, finances, housing and other decisions. These are their wishes or preferences.
2. They may resist having this type of “advance care planning” discussion and documentation.
3. Ensure the senior knows that in the event they are unable to speak for themselves, their wishes/preferences will need to be known to their appointed designates.
4. They also have the right to change their mind, as long as they are capable to do so.
5. The senior may be comfortable sharing their wishes with you but ask that you not share what they tell you with others.

Practical tips

- It may take you raising it more than once to get a senior to open up about their wishes for future. It is sometimes a difficult conversation because it focuses on a time when they may be deteriorating mentally or physically.
- Make sure the senior understands that the conversations are being held so that their wishes will be taken into account, at a time when they may not be able to speak for themselves.
- Also let them know how helpful it will be to know their wishes; caregivers appreciate the peace of mind.
- Documenting wishes, especially if there is family conflict, will maintain peace and avoid disputes in a moment of crisis.
- Be respectful of their wishes; do NOT make blanket promises (especially if doing so creates risk to them or is personally/financially irresponsible). Promise to do your best.



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Stay well.

Caregiving can be very stressful – it can take its toll physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and financially. Stress and time commitments associated with caregiving can lead to fatigue, isolation, burnout, and depression.

Find ways to actively manage stress.

- Do something fun. Stay positive.
- Maintain healthy habits – exercise, eat well, LAUGH, and protect time daily for personal (restorative) activities.
- Social activities are often dropped by caregivers. Make a few key pleasant activities part of a daily routine – activities frequently abandoned by caregivers as their duties increase. Vacations (even brief), hobbies, socialization with family and friends all improve caregiver wellness and sleep.
- Meditation and yoga may also improve sleep and reduce daytime fatigue and stress - it is free and proven to provide benefits in as little as 2 minutes a day. Breathing deeply may help you deal with frustration, anger or anxiety. Try online apps if you do not have time for formal classes.
- Be grateful.
- Sleep well. Keep a regular bedtime routine. Deal with concerns before going to bed. For example, make a list of duties. Guard against bringing electronic devices into your sleep area, otherwise you will not 'unplug'.
- Accept offers of help from others, and maintain a list of ways they can best do so.



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- Many people feel that no matter how much they do or try, it will not be enough. BE REALISTIC.
- Many of us juggle multiple responsibilities in addition to caregiving – work, relationships, children, social responsibilities. It will be helpful to reduce select commitments where you can. That said, you cannot put everything else in your life on hold for caregiving – which is tempting especially in the short term. You need to find balance in your life so that you can look after yourself. Keep the long game in mind.
- Reach out for help and support. Many caregivers feel that they need encouragement, or even permission, from other family members, healthcare providers and friends to maintain or return to enjoyable routines, or even exercise.
- Accept that you cannot control everything.



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Communication is key!

Good communication is a high priority as you take on the role of caregiver.

1. It impacts every interaction with the senior, family members and the senior's care team, as well as any other support services.
2. Be clear in your conversations. Take good notes of what was said, by whom, and whether any follow up is required by you or by someone else.
3. Be prepared.
4. If there are conflicts with the senior, family members or the healthcare team, address them early and keep your emotions in check. Resolve any tensions so that everyone can focus on the pressing issues at hand.

Practical tips

- Don't be afraid to ask questions, or to ask someone (such as a healthcare provider) to repeat what
- Be a good advocate for the senior. If someone says you will receive a call from the healthcare team by a certain time, make note of it and follow up if you have not heard.
- Be pleasant with the healthcare team's staff. They are the gateway to getting things done.
- Don't let family baggage overtake the situation. Deescalate and move forward, while acknowledging how difficult the situation may be.
- Finally, listen to the senior and make sure others do as well.



