



# Rethinking your caregiving tasks

April 2014 Newsletter

Millions of Americans care for loved ones who are aging, sick or disabled. They may shop and cook for them, pay bills, do chores, take them to doctors' visits, help them with personal care and more.

## Caregiving has rewards... but it's also hard work

Many caregivers leave their paying jobs at 5:00 each day — to go to their unpaid jobs helping loved ones. It can be a tough schedule for caregivers and their families.

## Reassess from time to time

Caregivers need to reassess what they're doing every few months. They need to ask themselves:

- **Am I doing things that my loved one can do for himself or herself?** You start out taking on responsibilities and soon they're just part of your routine. But what if your loved one can take back some tasks?

Caregivers shouldn't do things their loved ones can do on their own. Sure, those tasks may not get done as quickly or expertly as you do them. But think how good it is for care recipients to feel they can do more for themselves.

- **Do I need to ask for help?** Caregiving can be exhausting. At times, your own happiness and health may suffer. You need to know when to ask for help.

There are national, community and private organizations that help with caregiving. Some can provide aides, home-delivered meals, rides to doctors, banks and supermarkets. Call your town Health Department, local Area Agency on

Aging or visit [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org) for more information on services, costs and availability.

Also, you know those friends who say "call me when you need help"? Do you hesitate to ask? Do you dismiss the offers as vague or insincere?

People may be happy to help if you let them know your needs. Try to be specific:

- "Can you please pick up some bread and milk for my Dad?"
- "Can you stay with my Mom for an hour so I can go to the gym?"

- **Should I expect my out-of-town siblings to help?**

Caregivers often think relatives who live far away can't help. That can cause resentment. Plus, it's not true.

Again, you may need to speak up. Try to be specific:

- "Can you please chip in on a home health aide for Dad so I can get some relief?"
- "Can you call Mom to check on her on Wednesday nights so I can go to yoga then?"
- "Can you come for a weekend to watch Mom so I can get away for a few days?"

## Respect your own needs

Caregiving can be a chance to give back to parents and others you love. But it also takes great effort — both physical and emotional.

Remember to reassess what you're doing every so often. Ask for help when you need it. If you're a caregiver, you need to care for you, too.