VNS Health

Family Guide to Caregiving

Here’s how to work together when caregiving is a family affair.

As a loved one ages and requires more care, your relationship with them may change. And when caregiving is shared among family members, your relationships with them might also change — and not always for the better.

Siblings, cousins, and even extended family may all play a role in caring for your loved one and discussing options for care. If your loved one is able to make decisions, they and their spouse or partner should have the final say. Sometimes this can make decisions more complicated.

Caregiving can change family dynamics, but it can also deepen family ties. This guide to caregiving can be a resource for you and your family, helping you all to provide the best possible care to your loved one.

Resources to Help Your Caregiving Family

- Tips for Long-Distance Caregiving
- When Siblings Won’t Help
- Your Family Caregiving Role
- Talking to Your Family About Hospice Care

Why can’t I just do everything myself?

53 million

People in the US have been a caregiver in the last 5 years.

26%

Of caregivers have a hard time coordinating their loved one’s care.

24%

Of caregivers are providing care to more than one loved one.

How to Make Family Caregiving Work

Caregiving as a family isn't always easy. As your loved one's health changes, issues and decisions you might have handled yourself might become a bigger discussion with other family members. But that doesn't have to be a bad thing, especially if you take steps to work together. Some common struggles that families face when it comes to caregiving together include:

Splitting up caregiving roles

When several people are involved with caregiving, sharing the responsibilities evenly can be hard. The sibling who lives closest often ends up doing the most. You may find that your siblings aren't helping. If you live far away, you may feel guilty for not being able to do more.

These scenarios can cause you and your family unneeded stress. Deciding who can do what means talking about what your loved one needs help with and which family member will be responsible. You may need to discuss your schedules, skills, and availability.

Talking about money

Health care and home care can be expensive. Paying for care can become a source of tension in some families, and talking about money can feel hard or uncomfortable. Be honest about any concerns you may have — and listen to your family's concerns as well. As with many aspects of caregiving as a family, communication is key.

Lack of time

If an aging parent needs more help, the sibling who lives closest may spend more time as a caregiver. Having this connection with your loved one can be important, but it can also be overwhelming for one person. Let other family members know when they need to step up. It's important for you to take time for yourself, as well as time to spend with your family.

Although caregiving as a family can be hard, it’s not impossible — and it can also be really rewarding. You may find your relationships with family members growing stronger and deeper. You might learn something new about your sibling, and you can make great memories when you take the time to appreciate each other.

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