



The Van Products Caregiver Guide

Becoming a Caregiver





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Many people become caregivers unexpectedly, often after an event has left a loved one unable to care for him or herself. At Van Products, we understand that caregivers are often faced with a series of important decisions, but that the number of questions that come along with those decisions can be simply overwhelming. The decision to care for a family member means a significant amount of preparation and research, so having support and guidance can help alleviate some of the pressure you may feel at this major life change.

We have assembled these recommendations based on conversations and our experience with hundreds of caregivers who have faced these challenges before, so that you can have all the information you need for the big decision you'll be making. We hope this guide helps you in the rewarding experience of becoming a caregiver.

In this section, we list helpful resources that can assist you in your transition to becoming a caregiver.



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Caregiving Resources:

These great websites offer guidance on many aspects of becoming a caregiver. They offer information including financial advice, legal resources and full descriptions of an area's caregiver programs.

Family Caregiver Alliance – www.caregiver.org

This site contains excellent fact sheets about particular frequently asked questions regarding caregiving. The site's Family Care Navigator provides an [interactive map](#) that displays local resources available to caregivers in all 50 states.

Today's Caregiver – www.caregiver.com

Magazine focusing on issues relevant to caregivers. Also provides books, DVDs, and local resource directories on the caregiving process. This site also has an excellent section called "Carelinks" with links to dozens of helpful organizations focused on aspects of caregiving.

National Alliance for Caregiving – www.caregiving.org

This non-profit coalition focusing on the issues involved with family caregiving. Primarily a policy institution, NAC is a great resource for legal questions and advocacy outlets for caregivers.

Livestrong Senior Caregiving –

www.livestrong.com/senior-caregiving

The Livestrong site focuses on one type of caregiving, and has many articles written about various aspects of caring for an elderly loved one who is no longer self-sufficient.

The National Family Caregiver Association –

www.thefamilycaregiver.org

This association offers helpful resources and a community of caregivers, specifically focused on family caregiving. The site also is your connection to the Caregiver Community Action Network, which is a group of people who have served as caregivers to a family member and offer great support and guidance to those who are new caregivers.

FRIA's 5 Tips for New Caregivers

- Take breaks
- Find others like yourself
- Recognize the warning signs of stress and depression
- Get training
- Accept offers to help you





How to Develop a Caregiving Plan

Developing a caregiving plan is one of the most important steps a new caregiver can take. This plan will help you organize your thoughts and manage all of your new responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed. The plan should be flexible to account for the changes and unexpected events that are bound to occur as you begin caregiving.

The plan also will show you areas where you will need help from professionals, friends and family members, which will make asking for help more specific and effective. The planning process will remove some of the stress from your caregiving responsibilities because you will feel confident knowing you are prepared and have all the needed plans in place to keep the one you care for secure, safe, and comfortable.

Creating Your Plan

1. Gather all important documents for the person you are caring for, so that you have them all in an easily accessible, known location.
2. If your loved one is able, include them in the planning so that they can make their goals and needs clear. This will help them accept and adjust to the lifestyle changes.
3. Map out a normal day for yourself and identify areas that might be difficult to handle with your new caregiving responsibilities. These can include work, hobbies, family time, and events in which you participate.
4. Understand the needs of your loved one that you will need to assist with, and map that to your daily schedule. When conflicts are apparent, think about how you can shift your activities or enlist your support network to help you continue necessary activities.
5. Build in time for yourself to rest and restore. You will be a much better resource for your loved one if you remain healthy and energized. Get your support network to help in the caregiving process so you do not get overwhelmed.
6. Create emergency plans for illnesses and unexpected events. These inevitable times will be much less stressful with a plan in place beforehand.



Key Elements of a Caregiving Plan

- Important Personal Documents for the person you are helping
- Emergency Contacts
- Clear Responsibilities for others assisting you
- Priorities for the loved one you are caring for
- Participation from everyone who will be involved in the care of your loved one
- Organizational tools such as online calendars and bill payment systems



Managing Daily Tasks

It can be overwhelming to adjust to the level of service you must provide your loved one as his or her primary caregiver. Some routine daily tasks, both for you and your loved one can become difficult or frustrating. Here are some tips on daily tasks that can get more complicated as you enter a caregiver relationship, and how you can prepare for them.

Daily Task List

1. Meals

Food preparation can become difficult if you have to provide every meal for the loved one you are caring for. Tap into your support network of friends and relatives, and see if someone will commit to bringing dinner on a set night of the week, to give you some support. Pack “bagged lunches” for each day of the week on Monday, to make it easier during the busy week to make sure you are providing meals.

2. Household Chores

Keeping the house clean can be tough when juggling all of the other duties involved in caregiving. Talk to friends and relatives to see if they might be able to help you with some of the cleaning duties, especially initially as you learn how to manage your new responsibilities. Also, some local volunteer organizations might be willing to help you on a regular basis to keep your space clean and organized.

3. Transportation

If your loved one has become wheelchair bound due to illness or accident, transportation can be a burden. Van Products has wheelchair-enabled vans that allow people maximum mobility so they can continue their active lives. Call us about our rental program and used van sales as well as our latest models.

4. Child Care

If you have children, the additional responsibilities of caregiving can make child care even more taxing and complicated. If you don't have a reliable babysitter, be sure to find one as soon as possible, because there will be times when you need to use them to make appointments or in emergencies. If appointments for your loved one might conflict with taking children to school, look into carpooling with neighbors or friends.

5. Work

Be upfront with your employer as soon as you enter into a caregiving relationship, so any adjustments to your schedule are understood. Build flexibility into your job by requesting to work remotely or scheduling shifts around known appointments.

6. Financial Tasks

If you will be managing your loved one's financial situation as well as his or her personal care, be sure to have the information you need to do so.