



Part of the Van Products Caregiver Guide

Local Support Groups for Caregivers





Finding Caregiver Support Groups

As the caregiver for someone living with limited mobility, its important for you to continue to live your life and connect with people that can share in the joys and challenges of your role. Caregiver support groups represent a proven way to brighten your outlook, meet great people, and provide you with a support system so you can better support your loved one. Here are some great ways to find support groups:

Check with local chapters of foundations for specific diseases

- Alzheimer's Association- www.alz.org
- Multiple Sclerosis Society- www.nationalmssociety.org
- National Parkinson Foundation- www.parkinson.org

Caregiver online resources that list local chapters

- The Family Caregiver Alliance- www.caregiver.org
- Today's Caregiver- www.caregiver.com
- Aging Care- www.agingcare.com
- Guiding Lights- www.guidinglightsnc.org (located in Raleigh, NC near Van Products)

Helpline Resources

- The Well Spouse Foundation (1-800-838-0879)
- Children of Aging Parents (1-212-354-8525)

Word of Mouth

- Sometimes the best way to find great local resources is to reach out to others in your situation and find out how they solved problems and what types of support they received. Those that have been in your position will be more than glad to help you with you problems.

If no caregiver support groups are available in your area, you can always start one. We have some great tips for starting a group on the next page.





How to start a Support Group

If no support groups exist in your area, you can easily start a new group that can grow into a tremendous resource for yourself and others around you. While starting your own group is certainly a larger undertaking than joining an existing one, it is certainly worth it to experience camaraderie and pride of beginning your own support group. Here are some tips:

1

Find a Place to Meet

The first step to get your group started is to find a place to meet. It's important to keep in mind that the setting of your meeting is important in terms of attracting new members and finding a **comfortable environment**. It is best to meet in a public place that has **plenty of room**.

Great Places to Consider

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local churches | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Convention Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Park or Outdoor Area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College/ University | <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Shop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant |

2

Gather a Group to Help you Get Started

Next, you'll need to get a **small group of people**, whether they are friends, family, or people you find through a flyer at the doctors office. This group can **help you with planning the group**, setting up for the first meeting, and connecting others with your group.

3

Get Organized

Now it's time to organize your small group. Starting a website, telephone or email chain, or weekly meeting place is a good start in **building a communication system**. Everyone should be **on the same page** and you need to set a convenient time for the first meeting.

4

Get the Word Out

Before you host your first meeting, it's time to begin **networking and spreading news** about the first meeting. An ad in the **newspaper, flyers, or posters** at doctors offices or handicap supply stores could be a great way to find other people who might be interested. Also, using the **internet or social media** can be a great way to stay organized and reach more people.

5

Have a Structured Meeting Prepared

Once you've put in all the work, it is time to have your meeting. Important factors include:

- Have the **meeting area clearly marked**
- Being welcoming and friendly
- **Have material prepared.**
- Have a **structure for the meeting** (i.e. discussion topics or a guest speaker)

6

Keep the Momentum Going

After your first meeting, its important to keep **building on your success**. Make sure to have a regular meeting time and encourage participants to bring friends and **spread the word!**