



How to Create a Care Plan for an Aging Family Member

When you're caring for another person, every day presents new challenges. From changes in health status to changes in mood, caregivers must be ready to respond and adapt at a moment's notice. But when you're racing against the clock to prepare meals, organize medications, and keep house, it's easy to miss the little things. That's why it's so important for family caregivers to develop a care plan that details daily caregiving needs. Only by being organized and methodical can caregivers can keep their days on track and manage their loved one's evolving needs.

Creating a Care Plan

A care plan is an organizational tool that identifies, schedules, and assigns essential caregiving tasks. It should address routine needs like meals and medications as well as long-term objectives for your loved one's wellbeing.

Start building your care plan by assessing activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).

ADLs are the basic tasks required for daily functioning. They include:

- Bathing and grooming
- Using the toilet
- Dressing

- Feeding
- Walking

A senior who struggles with activities of daily living will require more hands-on, round-the-clock care than a senior who can meet their ADLs independently.

IADLs include more complex tasks, such as:

- Housekeeping and laundry
- Preparing meals and shopping
- Managing medications
- Managing finances
- Using the telephone
- Using transportation (personal or public)

A person may be able to complete some IADLs independently while requiring help with others. For example, a senior in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease may be able to keep up with housework but struggle to balance the checkbook and pay bills. Other seniors may be able to cook if ingredients are provided, or manage light chores but not heavier housekeeping. The University of Florida offers a helpful [checklist](#) that caregivers can use to assess their family member's level of functioning.

In addition to the activities of daily living, a care plan should address long-term goals for your loved one's wellbeing. Big picture goals might include losing or gaining weight, increasing social activity, or stabilizing a health condition. It's OK to aim high, but make sure goals are realistic and achievable.

Building a Care Team

Caregiving is a big job that's best shared across several people. Even if you're the primary caregiver, [family and friends](#) can help out in big or small ways to relieve some of the workload. Perhaps a sibling can cook dinner one night a week or a neighbor kid can take the trash to the curb. Consider far-away relatives too. Even if someone can't help in person, they may be able to lend a hand managing finances, scheduling appointments, or other tasks that can be done remotely. Every job that someone else can do is something off your own plate, and there's no job that's too small to make a difference.

Even if family and friends aren't available to help, you still have options. You can hire a weekly housekeeper to handle deep cleaning, a companion to engage your loved one in meaningful activities, or a personal care attendant to assist with bathing and grooming. Hiring [in-home help](#) preserves your energy so you can remain patient and present when your loved one needs you most.

Finding Help

Being a full-time caregiver can be incredibly isolating, but you're not alone. There is a wide range of [services](#) available to help family caregivers, from social services to support groups. In addition to hiring in-home help, caregivers should make the most of the following services:

- Adult day services or adult day care
- Caregiver support groups
- Meal providers
- [Occupational therapy](#)
- Senior and medical transportation
- Respite care

The [Eldercare Locator](#) can help you find services in your local community.

As a family caregiver, you're instrumental to your loved one's ability to age in place. However, the day-to-day demands of caregiving can be tedious and tiring, and burnout is common. By organizing duties into a care plan and utilizing the help available to you, you can manage your own stress while ensuring the highest quality of care for your family member.

Image via [Unsplash](#)