

# Catholic Caregivers

*'Caregiving is pro-life!'*

## Guidelines for Caregiving

**Self-determination:** It's still your *loved one's* life, not yours. You're there to assist, not take over. As long as your parent, spouse, family member or friends is competent, he or she should be included in decisions and those choices should be respected.

**Normalization:** A basic goal for you is to help your care-receiver continue to lead the same lifestyle he or she has been leading and wants to keep leading (provided, of course, that lifestyle is not undermining his or her health or safety).

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**Individualization.** Just because your friend did this or that for her loved one, it doesn't mean it's best for your care-receiver.

And what was good for a loved one you were helping in the past, may not be what's good for the person you're helping now.

**Communication:** Planning early and talking often — even about difficult subjects — will help you and your loved one avoid having to work things out in the middle of a crisis.

**Support:** There are a number of support systems for both you and your care-receiver. In addition to family, friends, neighbors and members of the parish, both professional and peer-group systems of support can be extremely helpful

**Use of Resources:** You don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are lots of resources and services available. Researching can be challenging but it's worth the effort. Remember there are resources and services for both your loved one and you, the caregiver.

**Solutions:** Most often there are no quick fixes to your loved one's increasing needs. There are no simple answers. Keep in mind that even the best solution is only temporary. As his or her situation changes, and it will, even the best answer will have to be reviewed and reworked.

**Minimum to maximum:** If there is resistance, start with the most basic and critical help needed. Stick with only that and keep it very limited. Then, gradually increase services to cover more things. This approach helps with your loved one's comfort level and it also helps you evaluate how things are going and what more may be needed.

**Ongoing process:** The aging process never stops and each step along the way can bring new challenges for both you and your loved one.

As your care-receiver's health deteriorates, your traditional roles (as couple with the wife handling one set of tasks and the husband taking care of another, for example) may continue to fluctuate or (as adult and child) reverse.

These changes are new for both of you and can seem overwhelming. Remember that neither of you has to be an expert at this. Both of you can learn together

**Prayer:** As is true when facing so many of life's challenges, the best coping strategy includes turning to prayer. Pray for your loved one, that he or she can accept what is happening and find comfort. Pray for yourself, that you will have the strength to do the many tasks before you. Pray that both you and your care-receiver will have wisdom when decisions need to be made. Pray that you both will feel the love of God, our heavenly Father. Pray for your fellow caregivers.

Pray, right here, right now. □

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### ***You're not alone!***

Members of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver are *praying for you and your loved one every day!* Find out more at [www.FSJC.org](http://www.FSJC.org) or write P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.

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### ***Looking for help?***

Spirituality, information and resources for Catholic caregivers are available at [www.YourAgingParent.com](http://www.YourAgingParent.com), a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver.