

# HOMECARE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

## Caregiver Survival Tips

When you're caring for a loved one too ill to care for himself or herself, it is also important to save some time and energy for yourself. Here's how:

When you go through a care giving experience, it can seem odd and even unreal. Dealing with physicians and "hospital speak" may make you feel as if you're in some bizarre alternate world. It may help you to realize that this is a universal human phenomenon. You are not alone in the experience or in facing these challenges. Here are some insights to help you survive and, yes, spiritually grow.



### Assume the Role of Caregiver

You are now the advocate. Make sure your loved one is getting the best medical care possible. Your job is not to "play doctor," but to find the most competent and caring physicians you can. Work with medical professionals you can trust to guide you and your loved one through these difficult times. As you find strength you never knew you had, make sure you save some for your own life. One of the hazards of caretaking is sacrificing yourself in the process.

### Deal with One Thing at a Time

During times of actual crisis, don't project or worry about the future. Deal with the immediate only. Pick out the closest goal or target. Don't begin to worry about what will or might occur down the road. Don't dwell on how traumatic these events are for everyone in the family. This will only increase your anxiety and distress. Pick the next step and place one foot in front of the other;

concentrate fully on that. Your worry about the future is a waste of your energy during times of crisis. Furthermore, your predictions may be entirely erroneous.

### Acknowledge Your Emotional Stress

Fear is the most basic of emotions. When a parent or loved one is ill or incapacitated, it can make you feel like a child again. The shocking awareness, in childhood, that we are separate beings whose parents cannot protect us is a feeling that never truly dissipates. The fear of being alone rushes back precipitously when we are reminded of our loved one's mortality. It is important to know that you will have moments of deep sadness and hopelessness when you see your loved one suffering, and that is a natural reaction.

### Face Your Deepest Fears and Pain

Most psychologists and spiritual leaders recognize the need to experience, rather than suppress, these feelings. The universality of death and transient nature of life are realities for us all. Knowing this from a spiritual perspective can help you dialogue and deal with the intense feelings of the heart. This is not easy —

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## Our People Make the Difference

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Thank you to everyone who participated and helped with **October's In-Service Training Sessions.**

**REMINDER: The holidays are just around the corner.** If you have plans to be on vacation during the upcoming season, please notify your supervisor so there's adequate time to find a **Sub for your client.** Also, be aware of pending winter weather. Stay in contact with your supervisor if bad weather comes.

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1-800-223-2841

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[homecaregmt.org](http://homecaregmt.org)

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but it is necessary and ultimately healing.

### **See Crisis as an Opportunity to Heal**

Many individuals have had fractured and painful relationships with their parents or loved ones. Seeing your loved ones as vulnerable and wounded may offer new opportunities for healing. Rather than repeating this cycle of generational pain/anger, this can be a transformative time for all concerned. Look for ways to put the past behind you and be present and loving.

### **Honor Loved Ones' Spiritual Journey**

Honor what is going on with your loved one on a spiritual level. In addition to the physical emergency, there is a higher truth. The physical brain/body is constantly changing and ultimately deteriorating. Spiritual forces will ultimately determine the outcome of this life, as well as its ending. This is not something you can control, although you can provide comfort, support, and care.

### **Share Your Fears With Others**

Don't try to deny your own pain and frustration. And don't try to hold it in. It is important to find outlets to ventilate your own distress and tell the truth about what you are going through. Don't be afraid of frightening off others. Those who care will be there for you.

### **Experience the Power of Love**

Soak in the love. Let the love and prayers of others uplift you. On your journey, remember that love heals. Your presence in your loved one's life is a healing presence. Let others replenish you with their love and compassion along the way.

### **Let Caregiving Transform You**

When a loved one is in a crisis, we change our priorities and notions of what is important in life. The pursuit of material wealth, professional recognition, and ego gratification are easily shed. Unfortunately,

after a while, time and again we forget these healing lessons and return to our prior state of consciousness. Make an effort to allow the life lessons of caretaking to help you on the road to self-improvement.

### **Know When to Let Go**

When it comes to decisions regarding end of life or continued treatment, be sure to make the judgment based on the best interest of your loved one. Too often there are unnecessary tests, procedures, and surgeries performed on individuals who are in the process of actively dying and who have no realistic hope for recovery. Rather than allow relatives to die peacefully, some people insist that "everything be done." This causes unnecessary pain and suffering. Often the motivation is guilt or the inability to let go. In such situations this can be a selfish, rather than a loving act. Know in your heart when it is time to let go.

### **Take Care of You**

Here is the most important advice: Take care of your own physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Although we may be focused completely on our loved one's suffering, we need to be strong in order to be there. Withdraw yourself mentally from the crisis for short periods, and do not feel guilty. Maintain your nutrition, exercise, and rest. Whether meditation, exercise, or prayer are your personal modes of finding strength, don't abandon them now. Remember the universal statements regarding the use of oxygen masks on airplanes: "When flying with children, always place YOUR mask on first." You have to be strong and conscious in order to help others.

By Steven E. Hodes, M.D.; board-certified physician and author of *Meta-Physician On Call for Better Health*. Visit him at his blog, [www.meta-md.com](http://www.meta-md.com).

## **Happy Birthday**

### **OCTOBER**

Mary Dibernardo, 4; Dana Haas, 5; Donald Jackson, 8; Sylvia McKinney, 10; Barbara Reel, 12; Patricia Cannon, 13; Virginia Lingerfelt, 15; Shirley Smith, 15; Etta McKinney, 31

### **NOVEMBER**

Lori Newton, 2; Anita Gibson, 4; Valeria White, 6; Betsy Morrison, 7; Mariana Blair, 11; Ella Mae Stewart, 11; Rose Johnson, 12; Elizabeth Tollie, 15; Patricia Nixon, 17; Suma Matheson, 22; Ethylene Roberts, 24; Barbara Antonelli, 30

### **DECEMBER**

Janet Lansford, 4; Donald Bryant, 8; Hanna Dellinger, 9; Joyce Seagle, 16; Betty Moretz, 19; Christine Dye, 22; Judy Southers, 26; Betty Thomas, 29; Sabrena Bynum, 31