

Five Potential New Year's Resolutions for Caregivers

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The final weeks of 2014 are upon us. It's that season when many people begin to ponder the resolutions they might make for the coming year. All worthwhile New Year's resolutions are difficult to put into effect successfully, but it's a good idea for everyone to adopt ideals that will give meaning and focus to their choices and activities. As caregivers, the reality of our lives is in some ways different than that of others. What New Year's Resolutions might make most sense for us to consider?

1. I will take care of my mental and physical health. Caregiving brings me many rewards. It is also demanding and can take a toll on my health, both physical and mental. I know that stress and depression are known contributing factors to illness. If I am not healthy I cannot take care of my loved one. I will strive to take care of my own health.

2. I will offer respect but also insist firmly on being treated with respect. I deserve respect from my care receiver, and from other family members, friends, and health care providers. While knowing that dementia will affect a person's behaviour, I'll also keep in mind that, when challenged, they may sometimes understand enough to change their behaviour for a time. I will calmly state to anyone who verbally abuses me that I do not allow anyone to treat me that way, and I will remove myself from the situation.

3. I will ask for help with caregiving if I need it. I will remember that if I need to leave a situation where I am being verbally or physically misused, I will seek respite or in-home care. If my loved one is in Long Term Care, I will alert the staff that I need to take a break.

4. I will remember that getting help is not a failure on my part. I realize that I sometimes

feel that I should be able to provide everything my care recipient needs. I have to recognize that there will be times when my loved one requires more help and specialized care than I can safely provide. Physicians, other health care professionals, in-home care, and Long Term Care all can and should help to take care of my loved one. I will give myself permission to accept help without guilt.

5. I will work in partnership with the professionals caring for my loved one. I want the best care possible for my loved one. Nonetheless, I will not let my passion for good care create an adversarial atmosphere with the professionals who provide care. I will remember I am my loved one's advocate but will also remember that most advocacies involve diplomacy. Partnerships create the right balance.



Tips for Caregivers

Dialing 8-1-1 gives you access to non-emergency health information and services. You will speak to a registered nurse who can provide advice, information, and reassurance about a number of general health issues.

Tips for Caregivers:

1. Be at the care recipient's residence when you call.
2. State that you are the person's primary caregiver.
3. You will likely be asked to go to your care recipient's side so that the nurse can ask you questions that will help her/him to understand and assess your care recipient's condition.

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