



## How to Coordinate a Caregiving Team

Caregivers for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease have an especially challenging job. Because Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, the needs of a loved one receiving care typically increase over time in number and magnitude. Additionally, the responsibilities of the caregiver can last for many years.

According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), taking a team approach to providing needed care is essential for caregivers in order to preserve their own well-being. Without the proper help and support, the substantial physical and emotional stresses experienced by many primary caregivers can take a harmful toll in the form of depression, physical and mental exhaustion and a variety of other serious conditions such as hypertension. This in turn has a negative impact on the individual who is dependent on receiving care.

Experts agree that the best way to begin organizing a care support team is to create a comprehensive list of the things you need help with. This can include things such as picking up prescriptions, taking your loved one to medical and dental appointments and covering for you when you have your own appointments and errands.

The key is to be specific in what you need so you have a ready list of helpful tasks that others can perform that have genuine value and truly ease your burden. Then if someone asks you if they can help, say yes and be specific in what they can do! People often want to help, but just don't know how.

### Helpful Resources Are Available to Assist You

If no one is offering to help, it is important to take the initiative and organize your own caregiving team. By using the list of tasks you've created, you can match your needs with people you know and other available resources.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the following caregiver resources should be considered for your caregiving team:

- **Your Family** – If you're caring for an aging parent, your family – specifically your siblings – should be your first “go to” option. It is critical to let others know that they need to be involved with the caregiving, even if you will function as the primary caregiver. Your spouse, children and other relatives should also be considered.



- **Your Friends and Neighbors** – Friends and neighbors also represent a potentially valuable source of help, particularly if you have close relationships with them. When asking for their help, be very clear and specific about what you would like them to do and how long you'll need their help.
- **Respite Care** – High quality respite care services are available that provide caregivers with needed “time off” and the peace of mind that comes with knowing your loved one is safe. Respite care services are available in a variety of time increments that can enable you to do your shopping, visit with friends or take a well-earned vacation.
- **Hired Assistance** – If you find that family and friends are insufficient to meet your caregiver support needs, hired help is also available. Assistance with house cleaning, home repairs, transportation and lawn maintenance are available for a price. This can be a good option if you are trying to coordinate your loved one's care from a distance.
- **Support Groups** – Caregiver support groups can also be a useful part of any caregiving team. They offer a valuable resource for obtaining useful information and suggestions, asking questions about specific challenges, obtaining access to community resources you may not be aware of or just venting frustrations to others who can relate. Support groups can usually be located through your local Alzheimer's Association chapter and soon will be offered at North Woods Village.
- **Care Coordination Websites** – Websites like **Lotsa Helping Hands** are available to help you coordinate your loved one's care. These sites can assist you with scheduling tasks and support, sharing information and organizing care. They can also help you create a private online network that all participating caregivers can access.
- **Professional Memory Care Communities** – Because Alzheimer's and dementia are progressive illnesses, at some point the level of care your loved one requires will not be possible or appropriate in the home. For caregivers who recognize that the needs of their loved one are beyond what they can safely and appropriately provide in the home environment, memory care assisted living communities are available that provide all of the care necessary for loved ones with memory disorders. Leading providers such as North Woods Village at Edison Lakes and its “**New Directions**”<sup>SM</sup> program provide evidence-based, best-practice therapies, advanced technology, lifestyle-enhancing social activities and wellness programs designed to optimize a loved one's health, comfort and happiness.

Remember, caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia is a highly challenging and demanding responsibility. Today, a variety of helpful resources exist that can provide the needed assistance to caregivers and also benefit those receiving the care.

*Guiding. Caring. Inspiring*