



Caregiver Tips

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The care and courage of caregivers sets the stage for recovery. Without them, the outcome is unsure. Because of this crucial role, they must take care of themselves.
Assisting in Rehabilitation

Family caregivers usually have more influence with their survivors than anyone else. Use that influence to survivors them to continue rehabilitation. It can pay great dividends in terms of their happiness, independence and well-being. Here are some tips that help survivors stay involved in rehabilitation.

1. If you can, include your children in the survivor's rehabilitation. (Grandchildren work, too!) Bring the family to encourage the survivor during rehab at the hospital.
2. Learn rehabilitation exercises from the therapist so that you can assist at home.
3. Encourage the survivor to finish what he or she starts. Do not let them give up. If the survivor becomes frustrated, stop that activity for a while, but make sure they come back to the task.
4. If the survivor can do a task, let him or her do it, even if it takes more time. If you do the task for them, they will depend on you to do it for them. They can't be independent by depending on you.
5. Contact medical schools for rehabilitation assistance at a low cost. Many graduate schools have physical therapy and speech pathology students who must fulfill requirements that include a certain number of hours of hands-on practice. Working with survivors is a win/win/win.
6. Ensure that your survivor gets adequate rest and takes medicine correctly.

Stress Management

It is entirely too easy for caregivers to burn out. After all, you are feeling the stress of two (or more) lives turned upside down. Remember, though, that you can't help your survivor if you are completely depleted. You must learn to manage stress, or you will end up as sick as your patient.

1. Ask for help. Feeling guilty about asking family and friends for help is a waste of time and energy
2. Join a caregiver support group. Ask therapists and psychologists to come and speak to the group about rehabilitation techniques, stress management and other topics. If there is no group to join, start one it is unlikely you are the only caregiver in town.

3. Practice time management. Find times when the survivor is resting or you can get someone to sit with them, then do something for yourself. Go for a long walk. Curl up with a good book. Meet a friend for a chat. Whatever helps you decompress make time to do that.
4. Every time you stop at a stoplight, take five deep breaths. Do the same every time you hang up the phone.
5. Sit quietly every day with your eyes closed and breathe deeply for 10 minutes.
6. Realize that your survivor will be fine even if you are not with them every moment.