



**Top 10 Ideas to
Help your Aging Loved
One...and you too!**

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT NETWORK
FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO HELP OR CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS

- 1. Get organized.** Keep a caregiver notebook and write down everything you do on behalf of your loved one. Record all phone calls with the date, place or person you are calling, the name of the person you spoke to, a contact number and some general notes about the conversation you had. Write down any questions you asked as well as the response you received and any decisions that were made. Ask for copies of any paperwork or documents and keep them in a safe place. Never hand over an original document or your original copy. If you absolutely have to turn over an original, be sure to make a copy for yourself first.
- 2. Arrange a family meeting** to discuss the long-term care plan for your aging loved one. Include discussions about finances, housing, safety, driving, personal care, shopping, meals, and medications. Be sure to include your loved one in all family meetings for as long as they are mentally and emotionally able to participate. For as long as possible it is important to make decisions **with** your older adult and not **for** them. For more details on how to hold a family meeting and what to discuss contact Interfaith's Family Caregiver Support Network at **(414) 220-8600**.
- 3. Contact your local Department on Aging** or Aging Resource Center to learn about available services and programs in your neighborhood. They may be able to help with things like home-delivered meals, transportation and long-term care options. In Milwaukee County Call **(414) 289-6874**. For a referral to the Department on Aging or Aging Resource Center closest to you or your loved one call Interfaith's Family Caregiver Support Network at **(414) 220-8600**.
- 4. Call Interfaith's Family Caregiver Support Network** at **(414) 220-8600** for referrals to community resources, support groups, and events for family caregivers. Talk to a resource specialist about family dynamics, family meetings, difficult decisions, living options, communication and advocacy tips, what to do and where to go next and where to start.
- 5. Set up an appointment with the doctor** to take full assessment of all age-related medical conditions, including memory.
- 6. Make sure future wishes are known** by having agents in place on the Powers of Attorney (POA) for health and finance documents. Make sure agents are aware of their responsibilities and know what to do should an emergency arise. Generic POA documents for the state of Wisconsin can be found at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/AdvDirectives/ADFormsPOA.htm>. In some cases it may be best to contact an Elder Law Attorney to have POA documents drafted for your specific situation. To find an elder law attorney in your area visit the National Association of Elder Law Attorneys at www.naela.org and click

on “Find an Attorney.” A listing of elder law attorneys can also be obtained from Interfaith’s Family Caregiver Support Network by calling **(414) 220-8603**.

7. **Understand your loved one’s daily routine, or if necessary develop one to include** regular meals, exercise and proper medication management. If needed, implement a regular check-in schedule to make sure medications, meals and schedules are on track by assigning family members to place telephone calls and to stop by at regular times throughout the week. ***(Hot Tip: Consider asking your loved one to sign up for a free senior center to keep them active and engaged in their community. It is especially important for seniors to have interaction and avoid isolation. Utilizing the services at an Adult Day Program is also a great option for some seniors who need additional care. As an added bonus these options also give family caregivers a much needed break!)***

8. **Arrange a meeting with a Geriatric Care Manager** to assess the current living arrangement and to develop a plan of care which will meet their ongoing needs. Geriatric care managers can be helpful for those who are caregiving at a distance, have long or unusual work hours, or in situations where family dynamics make caregiving especially difficult. To locate a geriatric care manager near you or your loved one visit the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers website at <http://www.caremanager.org/> and click on “Find a Care Manager.”

9. **Schedule a part-time caregiver** from a professionally licensed home care agency to provide weekly assistance with medication management, personal care and household duties in order to ensure meals and medications are on track along with regular exercise and socialization to promote healthy aging. Visit www.seniorresourcesonline.com and click on “Service Descriptions”, and then “Home Care” to find a home care agency near you or your loved one. ***(Hot Tip: this site is also helpful for finding independent senior apartments, assisted living facilities, adult day programs, hospice providers, and skilled nursing facilities.)***

10. **Take care of yourself.** You will not be able to provide adequate care for your loved one if you are neglecting your own needs. Learn the signs of caregiver stress and know when to take breaks (respite). Consider a caregiver support group. Do not put off your own medical appointments, surgeries or family engagements. Becoming educated about your loved ones specific needs and how to respond to them will help make your caregiving duties less stressful. For information on caregiver stress, respite breaks, caregiver events, support groups and educational opportunities contact Interfaith’s Family Caregiver Support Network at **(414) 220-8600**.



FAMILY
CAREGIVER
SUPPORT NETWORK

(414) 220-8600

www.living-options.org
www.caregiversupportnetwork.org
www.interfaithmilw.org

