

# Caregiver's Corner

## Five Tips For Caregivers

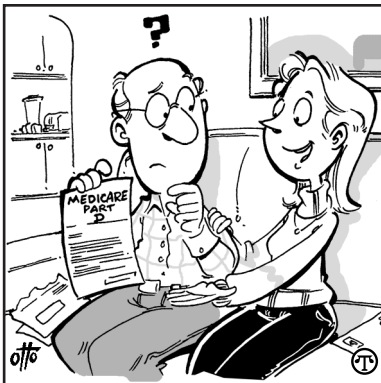
(NAPSA)—Approximately 15 million Americans provide care for others. Spending at least part of your day—before or after work—assisting parents, family members or friends who need help in order to remain living in their own homes can be a difficult task. It's even harder if you are one of the "Sandwich Generation"—caring for your parents while caring for your children, too.

If you feel stuck in the middle of caregiving, the U.S. Administration on Aging offers the following suggestions:

1. **Ask for help.** Siblings, cousins and other family members can help share the load. You may not have to go it alone. Neighbors and friends may be willing to provide transportation or respite care or take on shopping duties.

2. **Tap existing resources.** Ask about resources in your company that provide caregiving assistance. Many companies offer free or low-cost assistance programs to help ease the burden. Contact the Administration on Aging. It often has services that can help with everything from transportation to legal assistance. Also, Eldercare Locator ([www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)) helps track down resources.

3. **Empower the person you care for to be independent.** Understand that caregiving does not mean doing everything for



**Helping aging parents make financial and health decisions can be stressful, but assistance is available, if you know where to look for it.**

someone. Letting care recipients help themselves boosts self-worth. Many new technologies are available to support mobility needs.

4. **Know your options for home health care.** Churches, temples, senior employment services, senior centers and other agencies often coordinate care options and volunteer workers. Ask about the resources that may be available.

5. **Take care of yourself, too.** Studies show that caregivers who take care of their own needs are happier and healthier, and so are their charges. Treat yourself right. Give yourself quality time apart from caregiving.

Caregivers are constantly dealing with stress, not only because of new demands in their day-to-day lives, but also because of the increased sense of responsibility in caring for older family members.

"Helping aging parents make important financial and health-care decisions creates much pressure and stress," said Mark El-Tawil, chief Medicare officer of Health Net, Inc. "With the 2008 Medicare enrollment period now occurring, your elderly friends or parents may ask for help in deciding which Medicare plan to choose. Having the right information on the 'four Cs'—cost, convenience, customer service and coverage—makes the decision-making process easier and less stressful."

Added Dr. Ian Shaffer, chief medical officer of MHN, the behavioral health subsidiary of Health Net, "The decisions we might make for ourselves may not be the ones our parents would make, and the differences need to be reconciled. It's essential that caregivers attend to their own well-being, because ongoing stress can lead to depression, caregiver burnout and physical health problems."

For more information on Medicare Advantage plans, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Don't forget to get ideas and support from other caregivers. For more information on caregiving, go to [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov) or [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov).