

# Long-Distance Caregiving

during COVID-19.



The Defining Moment Foundation





# Ways to Be a More Effective Long-Distance Caregiver during COVID-19



When a family caregiver lives an hour or more away from the senior or loved one they are caring for, they are considered a **Long-distance Caregiver**. While caregiving can be a demanding role no matter where you live, right now with the **COVID-19** pandemic, long-distance caregivers face **unique challenges**.



# Three Unique Challenges to Long-Distance Care Givers during COVID-19

**Not being present:** Distance makes it difficult for family members to personally evaluate a loved one's well-being on a routine basis. Not being able to see a loved one on a regular basis, or view the living conditions of their home or nursing facility, puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to intervening long before small problems become more serious ones.



**“It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing.” - Mother Teresa**

**“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”**



**Travel Time:** Being separated also makes it tougher for a long-distance family caregiver to respond quickly in the event of a health crisis. If your senior or loved one experiences an immediate medical issue, the current safeguards in place for the pandemic **may make it nearly impossible for you to be at their side.** Living across the country or outside of the United States, can add another layer of complexity to an already stressful situation.

**“To care for those who once cared for us is one of the highest honors.”**



**Expenses:** With millions of people unemployed due to the pandemic, and the economic reality of people using their emergency funds just to survive on a daily basis, **Long-Distance Caregivers** are often unprepared for the travel costs they may incur. Frequent travel expenses combined with unpaid time off from work can make it tough to manage the financial costs of long-distance caregiving.

# Six Tips for Long-Distance Caregiving

Anyone who is caring for a friend, relative or parent from far away can be considered a Long-Distance Caregiver. Whether you are helping with finances, arranging for care, or providing emotional support, long-distance caregiving can bring a host of unique challenges.

Keep these tips in mind to help make life more manageable

**1** Learn as much as you can about your loved one's health, treatments and available caregiving resources. You can understand what is going on, anticipate the course of an illness, prevent crises, and assist in healthcare management.



**2** Organize Important paperwork. Keep all vital information in one place and up-to-date, including healthcare documents, wills and financial information. Provide copies to other caregivers.





**3** Make sure at least one caregiver has written permission to receive medical and financial information. To the extent possible, one person should handle conversations with all healthcare providers.



**4** Plans your visits. Find out in advance what the person would like to do. Aim for simple and relaxing activities and check with the primary caregiver to see if you can help with any priority tasks.



**5** Stay Connected. Schedule calls with healthcare providers and faculty staff to discuss the person's well-being. Update trusted family members on your loved one's health and needs.



**6** Consider caregiver training. Some local chapters of the American Red Cross or other not-for-profit organizations might offer caregiving courses. Medicare and Medicaid will sometimes cover the cost of this training.





# Idealists - How to be a Great Long-Distance Caregiver



**If there is one common thread among idealists, it's our deep desire to help and support others, be they family members, members of our community, or fellow humans across the globe. We understand that for most of us, the novel coronavirus feels uncertain and scary. But in spite of those feelings, many of us have still been moved to ask, "How can I help?"**

# These are a variety of ways to support each other during COVID-19.

## **1. Check on your neighbors:**

Call or text your neighbors, especially elderly neighbors, to make sure they're doing okay. Ask if there is anything that they need, be it a box of tissues or a cup of sugar. If you have what they're looking for, offer to leave it outside their front door so that they can pick it up without coming in direct contact with you. This is a great and safe way to make sure that your most vulnerable neighbors have what they need.

**If you feel comfortable going out, consider knocking on the door of an elderly neighbor and chatting through the screen or storm door just to offer a bit of comfort and reassurance.**



**“Join the battle against social isolation that is impacting some of our most vulnerable population”**



## **2. Explore ways to connect and volunteer virtually:**

As the landscape of volunteering evolves in the wake of **COVID-19**, you're likely to see many new virtual opportunities posted online.

Dorot, an NYC-based organization whose mission is to alleviate **social isolation among the elderly and homebound**, is seeking volunteers willing to make weekly, friendly phone calls to their clients.

**In Bergen County houses of worship have current lists of shut-ins to call or write to.**



**3. You can also expect to see a lot of new platforms, tools, and apps for connecting with people and getting the job done virtually:**

One such example that predates **COVID-19**, is the *Be My Eyes* app. This amazing app pairs the blind and visually impaired with volunteers via a video call in order to assist with everyday tasks, such as reading a recipe on the back of a box or selecting a particular article of clothing from the closet. Now more than ever, there is a need to maintain person-to-person connection in any safe way that we can.





#### **4. Be a Leader:**

If you're in a position of professional authority and you have the decision-making power to allow your team to work from home and your organization can operate virtually, **make it happen.**

Even if you don't consider your employees to be particularly high risk, **making the call to work from home sends an important message to your entire team.**

## 5. Find your local mutual aid network:

Right now, all over the country and around the world, communities are coming together to create mutual aid networks.

Think of a mutual aid network as a kind of hyper-local **COVID-19** Craigslist where neighbors are able to post their needs. For example, groceries, translation services, pharmacy runs, even cash to make rent and others can choose to answer the call. Find your local mutual aid network or start your own.





# Make Yourself a Priority, Too

## Tips for Long-Distance Caregivers

It is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver.



Ask for help when you need it.

Spend time with friends.





**Join a support group -  
in person or online.**

**Take breaks each day.**



**Keep up with hobbies.**

Nearly 15 million Americans provide unpaid care to an older adult and upwards of **75% of all caregivers are female** and may spend as much as fifty percent more time providing more care than males.



Caregivers who provide substantial care are more likely to have physical and emotional health problems.

**“The simple act of caring is heroic”**



# Burnout Versus Compassion Fatigue for Long-Distance Caregivers during COVID-19

**Compassion fatigue:** has similar symptoms to burnout. Compassion fatigue is a preoccupation with absorbing trauma and emotional stresses of others, this creates a secondary traumatic stress in the helper. **Compassion fatigue** can be defined as the emotional residue of exposure of working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. **The prolonged exposure from listening to a senior or loved one's traumatic stories makes you susceptible to compassion fatigue and is not always easily identifiable.**

**Burnout:** is about being 'worn out' and can affect any profession. The impacts of burnout emerge gradually over time and are easily identified to direct links and stressors within the working and personal life. **Things that inspire passion, drive and enthusiasm are stripped away as tedious, unpleasant thoughts take over.**

**The differentiating factor between the two types of stresses: burnout emerged over time and compassion fatigue, if identified and managed early has a faster recovery time.**

# Caregiver Quiz

Score each item on a scale of 1 through 7 :

1 (Never)   2 (Once or twice)   3 (Rarely)   4 (Sometimes)  
5 (Often)   6 (Usually)   7 (Always)

In caring for a loved one, how often do you have the following experiences:

**Score**

<input type="text"/>	Feeling resentful
<input type="text"/>	Feeling trapped
<input type="text"/>	Being tired, not getting enough sleep
<input type="text"/>	Feeling weary
<input type="text"/>	Feeling troubled
<input type="text"/>	Feeling helpless
<input type="text"/>	Poor appetite or overeating
<input type="text"/>	Feeling useless

**Score**

<input type="text"/>	Being physically exhausted
<input type="text"/>	Feeling disillusioned
<input type="text"/>	Being utterly drained of feeling
<input type="text"/>	Feeling “burned out”
<input type="text"/>	Being unhappy
<input type="text"/>	Feeling anxious
<input type="text"/>	Feeling rejected
<input type="text"/>	<b>Total</b>

If your score is **under 60**, you're in good shape. If your total score is **60 or above**, the stress of being a caregiver is beginning to take its toll. If it's **90 or above**, you are living with **Caregiver Burnout. You are not alone!** A study conducted found that more than half of those who provide major care, experience stress and strain. Prolonged stress can have serious physical and emotional consequences. **Take Care of your Own Health First!**

# Inspirational quotes for Long-Distance Caregivers during COVID-19

We're at our best when we're thinking positively, and these inspirational quotes can give you just the boost of support you need to keep going.

1. "There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers. Those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers, and those who will need a caregiver." - [Rosalyn Carter](#)
2. "My caregiver mantra is to remember: The only control you have is over the changes you choose to make." - [Nancy L. Kriseman, The Mindful Caregiver: Finding Ease in the Caregiving Journey](#)
3. "The closest thing to being cared for is to care for someone else." - [Carson McCullers, The Square Root of Wonderful](#)
4. "It is not the load that breaks you down. It's the way you carry it." - [Lena Horne, singer](#)
5. "Sometimes asking for help is the most meaningful example of self-reliance." - [from poem "Sometimes" by U.S. Senator Cory Booker](#)



6. “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” - **Dalai Lama**
7. “Take care of your body. It’s the only place you have to live.” - **Jim Rohn, author and motivational speaker**
8. “Some days there won’t be a song in your heart. Sing anyway.” - **Emory Austin**
9. “Life’s challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they’re supposed to help you discover who you are.” - **Bernice Johnson Reagon**
10. “Compassion brings us to a stop, and for a moment we rise above ourselves.” — **Mason Cooley**





“Kindness can transform someone’s dark moment with a blaze of light. You’ll never know how much your caring matters. Make a difference for another today.”

**HONORING ALL LONG DISTANCE CAREGIVERS  
DURING COVID-19**