

TRANSPORTATION TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

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According to an AARP survey of family caregivers (1997), eight out of ten caregivers reported helping with transportation. The difficulties that arise in the area of transportation include handling a wheelchair or other assistive device, agitation, distracting behaviors, and non-compliance. This can lead to frustration and angry feelings on the part of the caregiver. The following are tips that can help to solve some of the transportation issues that caregivers face.

1. Be patient and calm. Remain aware of your body language.
2. Allow yourself and your loved one plenty of time. The slower you go, the faster things get done.
3. Keep directions simple by explaining them one step at a time and by demonstrating what it is you'd like him/her to do. Give information in small amounts. Repeat yourself using a calm tone of voice as necessary.
4. Be prepared with relaxing music, sunglasses, photos, or food in case they are needed during the ride. Encourage reminiscence.
5. Use proper body mechanics. Take advantage of adaptive equipment that can make transfers and mobility much easier for your loved one.
6. Suggest that your loved one use the bathroom before each trip.
7. Plan ahead if you are going to a new place with your loved one by calling before you leave to find out what entrance to use.
8. If your loved one becomes agitated or resistive, agree and act as if you are going along with his/her plan while you proceed with your original plan and destination. Take cues from your loved one's behaviors. Try to see things from his/her perspective.
9. Seat your loved one in the rear passenger seat so that the steering wheel is out of reach and he/she is not directly behind you, enabling you to make eye contact with him/her periodically while driving. Use the seat belt and make sure the child lock is in the "on" position. Have a cellular phone in the car, in case you need help.
10. Think about joining a support group for caregivers to gain new ideas and to be with others in similar circumstances. This can help to energize you and help you to do a better job of caregiving.

Source: Adapted from the Easter Seals program, Transportation Solutions for Caregivers: A Starting Point. 2002. This program is available for loan from the Caregiver Resource Network library. Call (616) 234-3483 for more information.

This fact sheet is provided as a public service of the Caregiver Resource Network. The **Caregiver Resource Network** is a collaboration of Kent County organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at www.CaregiverResource.net or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.