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## 10 Tips for Family Caregivers

1. Join a support group. Groups allow you to vent, ease emotional stress, work through specific problems and find quicker solutions. Most of the support groups in Polk County are organized by medical conditions, such as Support for Alzheimer's Caregivers, or Support for Parkinson's Caregivers. Polk County Family Caregivers can supply you with a current list of every support group in the county!
2. Don't feel guilty about venting frustration caused by caring for your loved one. It is tedious, tiring and frustrating work. Loving someone doesn't mean it isn't difficult.
3. Take care of yourself – eat right, exercise, get away by yourself sometimes, get enough sleep and maintain your sense of humor.
4. Find ways to enjoy your hobbies, interested and maintain or establish social contacts. Easier said than done!
5. Ask questions of your loved one about his or her feelings. What does your loved one want from you?
6. Ask your loved one about any medical conditions or health problems. Know which doctors they are seeing and for what problems they see them. Also be familiar with all the medications they take.
7. Learn more about the medical condition of your loved one by asking questions of health professionals. Use community resources and research the internet. The more you understand about the problem, the closer you are to finding ways to adjust, understand, and know what to expect next.
8. Get your legal needs under control. Many caregivers put off dealing with legal issues like wills and healthcare power of attorney documents until it is too late for their loved one to participate in the legal process. Then it is just too late and you may be left lacking the ability to legally do what your loved one wants.
9. Get advice about financial considerations such as income, pensions, social security payments, investments, bank accounts and mortgages. You and your loved one will need all the financial resources you can possibly pull together.
10. Ask for help when you need it. Seek family, neighbors, church friends, volunteer organizations and professional caregiving for respite and utilize programs such as adult day care to help you with your loved one.