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Who is a Family Caregiver?

The term "family caregiver" is used to describe informal (or unpaid) caregivers who are relatives, neighbors, partners and friends of seniors and adults with disabilities. Today, many seniors and disabled adults who need long-term care can remain in their homes and maintain their independence only because of the assistance they receive from these caregivers.

Caregiving may be one of the most important roles you will undertake in your lifetime. Typically it is not an easy role, nor is it one for which most of us are prepared. As a caregiver you may have questions about how to cope with your care receiver's illness or disability. If you have a job and are juggling several responsibilities, or if your family member or friend needs a lot of assistance, you may also need help with caregiving.

Whether you are expecting to become a caregiver or have been thrust into the role overnight, it is useful to know where you can get information and help. Many family caregivers, particularly people who provide around-the-clock care, often face emotional, physical, and financial problems. Without help and support, these problems can worsen and the caregiver's own health may suffer.

When caregivers take care of themselves, they can do a better job of taking care of their loved ones. If you are in the role of family caregiver, know that you are not alone and help is available for all sorts of family caregiving, including grandparents who care for grandchildren.