

How to Effectively care for a Senior Loved One from Long Distance



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If you're caring for a parent or another senior loved one from a long distance away, it can certainly be a difficult process. The logistics are much different than if you were close by, as you can't simply drop in to help them out at a moment's notice. However, being a great long-distance caregiver to a senior is very much possible with some preparation. In fact, with the right planning, you can be every bit as capable as a local caregiver.

Get Organized

Caregiving from a distance is mostly about being organized. To begin the process of being organized, consider taking all the needed documents to the cloud. Use a solution like [Google Docs](#) that will allow you and your loved one to access the documents no matter where you are in the world. Additionally, a cloud solution makes it easy to collaborate and share with other caregivers instantaneously.

Many seniors need help with doctors' appointments, medication, and other medical-related issues. Document all medical history and vital information [in an app](#) or on a shared file. Keep it updated and be sure to track dates and dosages. If a doctor's office ever has a question, you can easily email or fax the necessary documentation.

Build a Local Network

Since it's impossible for you to help in person in a timely manner, it's important to build a network of people who live close to your loved one who can. Contact neighbors, friends, and others who can help out in a time of need. For example, if your parent attends church regularly, consider contacting the pastor or other churchgoers.

The US Administration on Aging offers a public service called [Eldercare Locator](#) that helps caregivers connect seniors with support resources in the local area. Simply enter a zip code or a city and state and you'll find a list of resources that can assist with caregiving, whether that's transportation to a doctor's appointment or getting in-home help.

Buy a Cell Phone

Even if you're caring for a senior who has never used one, modern cell phones are such a powerful tool that it's worth investing in one and teaching your loved one how to use it. If you're looking for a smartphone that makes sense for a senior, consider a Samsung Galaxy S10. It comes with a crystal clear display that is approximately six inches in diameter. You can also enable [Easy Mode](#), which will shorten the learning curve for a senior by simplifying the home screen and making the smartphone more intuitive to use.

If a smartphone is too overwhelming, a flip phone is better than a landline. The [Jitterbug Flip](#) is a flip phone built specifically for seniors in mind. It features strong speakers, large buttons, a bright screen, and a simplified menu. The [Nokia 3310](#) is also a good choice. Not only does it have [legendary durability](#), but its battery can last around 30 days on standby.

Once you've found the right phone, you need to pair it with the right provider and plan. Look for a provider that has good coverage in the area. Then, get a plan from that provider with a sufficient allotment of minutes, text messages, and data. Verizon, for example, has plans for seniors that provide unlimited talk, text, and data, though you can scale back that data to [around 2 gigabytes](#) if your loved one doesn't use it.

Medical Alert System

For long-distance caregivers, the peace of mind a [medical alert system](#) can provide is priceless. With a medical alert system, a senior can simply press a button on their wearable device to call for help in an emergency. With dozens of these products on the market these days, [AARP](#) recommends looking at the features to narrow down your search. Available features include fall detection, GPS locator, and medical and activity monitoring.

Start a Routine

Once you have everything in place, the final step is to start a [routine](#) with your loved one. Part of your routine should be regular phone calls. These calls won't only be a good source of info; they will help ensure your bond remains strong despite the distance between you two.

Although being a long-distance caregiver can certainly have its challenges, modern technology is making it easier and easier. With the help of cloud documents, cell phones, medical alert systems, and some old-fashioned networking, you can provide superb care to a senior loved one, no matter how far away you live.