

Should You Be a Caregiver?

Not everyone is suited to caregiving. Before assuming caregiving duties, it is important that caregivers participate in a process that Bernie Siegel, the physician who specializes in self-care for cancer therapy, calls “carefrontation,” a time of introspection to help potential caregivers determine if they can legitimately embrace the role. Introspection is an honest appraisal of capabilities when caregivers take a hard and truthful look at who they are and what they can handle physically, emotionally, and mentally. The fundamental question that must be asked is, What is the most loving choice for the care recipient, the potential caregivers, and the members of the respective families?

An impulsive or reactive choice to be a caregiver can lead to abuse of the care recipient, poor physical or emotional health, or fiscal fraud. Determining how much time can be spent performing caregiving tasks, how much money can be contributed, or what special skills can be offered is an important part of reflection. Another consideration is emotional support—how much the caregiver will need as well as how much the caregiver can provide for the care recipient. Importantly, those who have been abused at the hands of a parent or other individual should not serve as a caregiver for their abuser, for the sake of both parties’ safety and mental health.

Are You Cut Out for Caregiving? Questions to ask yourself:

1. Are you a nurturer?
2. What in your background supports being a nurturer?
3. Do you have any unresolved anger over how the care recipient treated you in the past?
4. Were you physically or sexually abused by the potential care recipient?
5. How is your health and stamina? Do you have the energy to be a principal caregiver?
6. What is your prime motivation for caregiving—guilt, family obligations, or love?
7. What duty and obligation do you believe you have to the potential care recipient?
8. Can you express your feelings and your opinions even when they are unpopular?
9. Can you comfort friends and family members when they are in distress?
10. Do you know your limits, and do you honor them?
11. Do you know how to manage stress? How well do you take care of yourself?
12. What role do religion and spirituality play in your life? Is it a support for you?
13. How would your family and home handle the addition of a parent or grandparent?
14. Do you work at home? Is your workspace separated from living space?
15. What kind of financial support can you provide?
16. Can you take on the responsibility of home care?
17. Can your home accommodate the care recipient’s needs? Could you remodel?
18. What sorts of support systems exist in your community to help you with caregiving?
19. Can you easily ask for help if you require it?
20. Can you set and maintain boundaries?

