

## The Many Faces of Caregiving

There is no one specific definition of a caregiver; every individual's situation is unique. Some caregivers start off by assisting a loved one with their finances, cleaning their house, or helping them get to and from their doctor's appointments. Other caregivers might immediately take over assisting an elder with bathing, getting dressed and going to the bathroom.

A caregiver could live in the same house, or reside 3,000 miles away. They may be taking care of two aging parents, one ill spouse, or three children and a parent at the same time.

The possible permutations are endless, but there are four main caregiver categories that are widely-recognized. Each grouping has its own separate set of challenges and considerations.

- **The Long-Distance Caregiver:** These individuals look out for elderly loved ones who live in a different, city, state, or country. But, just because they live far away doesn't mean these caregivers aren't often responsible for their family member's finances, medical care, and personal needs. One of the most difficult aspects of being a long-distance caregiver is how to keep an eye on a loved one from afar. When you only see an elderly parent a few times a year, how can you make sure they're getting the care they need? In these types of situations, [geriatric care managers](#) and [patient advocates](#) can be invaluable resources for family caregivers.
- **The Sandwich Generation Caregiver:** The aging of the baby boomer cohort has transformed the term, 'sandwich generation,' into somewhat of a buzzword. These men and women are so-named because they are, quite literally, sandwiched between taking care of their own young children, and looking after one or more elderly parents. They may work, they may not. The challenge for these individuals: [balancing the care needs of elderly parents and young children](#).
- **The Working Caregiver:** "[Should I quit my job to take care of my parents?](#)" is the quintessential dilemma of the working caregiver. In an era when adults of both genders have a presence in the workforce, the number of working caregivers is on the rise. Holding down a nine-to-five while making sure an elderly loved one is looked after is a seemingly impossible task; one that can be made more or less difficult, depending on the culture of the company that a caregiver works for. Here are some common [issues that people face when caregiving and work obligations collide](#).
- **The Spousal Caregiver:** The vow, "in sickness, and in health," takes on a whole new meaning when a person finds themselves taking care of a spouse with a serious illness. When a life partner becomes a life patient, a caregiver must deal

with a host of heart-wrenching problems, from how to handle unexpectedly altered roles to the [intimacy challenges faced by dementia caregivers](#).

No matter which of these group(s) you fall in to, you are a caregiver. And, as a caregiver, you will be a source of invaluable physical, emotional and spiritual support for your elderly loved one.

The journey may be short, or it may be long. There will be ups, downs and all-arounds. Ultimately, [caregiving is a legacy](#) to be proud of.

As AgingCare.com expert, Carol Bradley Bursack, puts it, “A caregiver is a person who takes on at least some part of the responsibility for the welfare of someone sick, elderly or disabled. If the title fits, wear it proudly my friends.”

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Provided courtesy of AgingCare.com, the go-to destination for family caregivers, where those caring for elderly family members will find a wealth of [caregiver resources and support](#). This article is one of a series of articles included in the eBook, *Family Caring for Family*. Download your free copy at [www.AgingCare.com/ebook](http://www.AgingCare.com/ebook).