



# Comprehensive Caregiving Considerations

*for*

Individuals, Families  
Organizations, Communities  
(and Self, too!)

*by*

Beth Albanese & Sylvia Henderson



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# INTRODUCTION

The busiest people are most aware that they need help with the “little things” in life. Sometimes life throws you “big things,” like facing decisions involving the care of loved ones.

This Pocket Reference Book gives you information to use immediately as you consider your care giving options, continue the care you already provide, or help others make difficult decisions.

**Lessons learned.** One of the most valuable gifts you can give in life—beyond unconditional love—is the gift of lessons learned so others succeed where you stumbled.

This Pocket Reference Book compiles suggestions, advice, comfort, and encouragement from two professionals in the mental health and personal development fields. Both Beth and Sylvia personally experienced the lessons learned in these pages by providing care to their respective loved ones.

*We wish you the best on your journey!*

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*“[God], grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.” — Reinhold Neibuhr, “The Serenity Prayer” (1926)*

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## COMING TO TERMS WITH NEEDS

- 1 Be ready for the unexpected.** Identify available resources before you need them so you are prepared when your need arises.
- 2 Discuss issues, feelings, situations, alternatives, and preferences prior to times of need.** This is basic emergency preparedness and should be a part of every family's preparation. You never know when you will activate the plan.
- 3 Look for superior professionals to help with the care giving functions.** See Resources at the end of this booklet for how to obtain a copy of "Guide to Retirement Living," to find professionals with high ethical standards.
- 4 Ask professionals for written assessments or evaluations.** This enables you to follow up on resources.
- 5 Involve the entire family in discussions.** Everyone should contribute to the discussion and know the medical, legal, managed care, end-of-life, and other critical decisions for each family member.
- 6 Document decisions and plans.** Know where each other's documentation is stored for quick access when needed.

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*"It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can do only a little. Do what you can."* – Sydney Smith  
 .....



## COMMUNICATE WITH EMPATHY AND RESPECT

### *For Staff and Professionals*

**7 Greet clients with a firm, friendly handshake.** This immediately communicates respect and empathy. Do this whether your client is the person needing care or the family or guardians.

**8 Realize there is little room for sympathy, and zero tolerance for condescension, disgust, or condemnation.** You are the professional and are expected to act professionally.

**9 Make direct eye contact when speaking with clients face-to-face, even with clients without sight.** Look at the triangular area above the nose and below the center of the two eyes if you or your client are uncomfortable maintaining eye contact.

**10 Put yourself at eye-level with the person to whom you speak.** Meet him at his level if your client is wheelchair bound or otherwise positioned.

**11 Keep your voice pleasant and friendly, even when delivering unfavorable news.** Present yourself as empathetic and caring rather than sarcastic and insensitive.

**12 Explain concepts and facts in multiple ways.** People process information in various ways. Some people are visual, needing pictures or diagrams. Others understand verbal descriptions well. Some need to touch or try something before they “get it.”

**13 Stop, and listen!** Learn what others need to hear from you or have you do.

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*“Courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones which strike deepest in the gratefully and appreciating heart.”* – Henry Clay  
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## LEGAL AND MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

**14 Use Elder Care Lawyers.** Their practices focus on care-giving issues. Your local Department of Aging and Disability can be helpful. See Resources at the end of this booklet to locate an Elder Care lawyer.

**15 Develop a payment plan for legal expenses that can add up over time.** A payment plan helps you retain your savings for as long as possible, and determine where and how you will finance needed expenses.

**16 Seek professionals to determine whether appropriate medical care can be provided at home.** They provide objective input to your decisions.

**17 Ask yourself whether your loved one will be safe in her own home.** Remaining at home provides a psychological peace that encourages mental and physical wellbeing.

**18 Get a second opinion.** You can decide which options make the most sense to you.

**19 Order “alert” necklaces from your local direct response distributor.** Safety is essential.

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*“I discovered I always have choices, and sometimes it’s only a choice of attitude.”*  
 – Judith M. Knowlton  
 .....



## SOLUTIONS FOR CARE PROVIDERS

**20 Use assessment instruments to determine measurable outcomes.** This minimizes subjective decisions and enables pragmatic and objective discussions.

**21 Practice reflective listening techniques to demonstrate sensitivity to a family in transition.** Nod your head, make eye contact, rephrase statements, and ask appropriate questions to clarify.

**22 See that your staff receives, and stays current with skills training, continuing education, and appropriate certifications to match care needs.** Regularly check staff credentials.

**23 Create community crisis plans for risk prevention.** Include in the plans:

- Standards and client rights
- Ethics
- Ombudsman (advocate / mediator) contacts
- Strategies for a client-centered approach
- Crisis centers or adult protection agencies are good resources.

**24 Keep daily communications logs up-to-date.** Make logs all-inclusive, noting medical, social situation, and other care needs.

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*“Believe it is possible to solve your problems. Tremendous things happen to the believer. So believe the answer will come. It will.”*

— Norman Vincent Peale

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## IS ANYONE ELSE GOING THROUGH THIS?

*(Feeling You Are In This Alone)*

**25 Remember that others have experienced what you are going through.** You are not the first to face the decisions you face.

**26 Ask others to help.** Do not go it alone. Negotiate with family members or those most responsible for care. Use their strengths.

**27 Be sure each one involved knows what is expected of him or her so you feel supported.** Accountability is essential.

**28 Find people to help you cope with and get through your tough times as a care giver.** Do this even if you never believed in or felt comfortable with the idea of support groups. Only those with experiences similar to yours can truly understand, laugh, and cry with you about the things you go through as a care giver.

**29 Use electronic communities to interact with others.** You can do this in the comfort of your home, or at times when you feel you cannot disturb family, friends, and neighbors.

**30 Be cautious of information you receive electronically.** Research sources and check key information with your own medical or legal professionals. View the information you receive as starting points for continued discussion with professionals.

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*“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”* — Lee Buscaglia

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## BEING OKAY WITH SUPERVISED CARE

- 31** Choose supervised care with the help of a caring professional. This is not the time to entrust your loved one's needs to just anyone.
- 32** Seek supervised alternative-living care when your loved one needs more care than you can give. Make the choice that is right for her needs, whether inside the home or at an alternative facility.
- 33** Use the "Guide to Retirement Living" website or magazine to locate resources. See Resources at the end of this booklet for how to obtain the guide.
- 34** Investigate alternative living arrangements. Visit more than one facility for comparison before deciding.
- 35** Find a solution that maintains a connection to family. Supervised living arrangements provide the best care when client families or guardians are active advocates in their care, partnering with trained caregivers.
- 36** Make sure you are able to visit at any time. This flexibility is crucial for maintaining emotional connections and being aware of the care level your loved one receives.

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*"Change is not merely necessary to life—it is life."* — Alvin Toffler

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## DIGNITY AND RESPECT

- 37** Allow the person receiving care to do what he can on his own. This maintains his dignity and respect.
- 38** Realize it rarely matters if things are done differently from the way you want them done or usually do them. Let him work it out on his own as long as safety is not an issue.
- 39** Clean up after an accident at a judicious time. This minimizes embarrassment when someone creates a mess he cannot control.
- 40** Suggest alternative actions and approaches to situations rather than demand or tell. Suggestions allow others to feel they have a choice in deciding what they will do or how they will do it.
- 41** Remember that the offspring is forever the "child" and the parent is forever the parent. Show respect and deference accordingly. It is a misconception that, as parents grow older and become dependent, parent/child roles reverse. Caregiving responsibilities reverse.

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*"You can learn new things at any time in your life if you're willing to be a beginner. If you actually learn to like being a beginner, the whole world opens up to you."* — Barabara Sher

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## MOVING OUT. MOVING IN.

**42** Create separate living space as much as possible if the person needing care moves into your home. This allows for privacy for everyone, yet still accommodates the needed care provisions.

**43** Integrate as many furnishings and belongings as will fit that are familiar to the care receiver. Having familiar items creates a level of comfort in otherwise strange surroundings.

**44** Clean out and discard items out of view of their owner. Provide distractions or have the owner out of the living space when culling her belongings. Know what is important (to her) to keep even if you question its value. It is what she treasures most that counts.

**45** Rent a storage locker for items that are “must keeps” but cannot fit into the new living quarters. When asked about the items, retrieve some to show you did not discard what you were asked to keep. Eventually you can weed out items in storage as they are forgotten over time.

**46** Consult professional movers who specialize in moving seniors and those needing care. The National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM) provides professional guidelines, support and assistance with the physical and emotional aspects of the moving process. See the Resources section of this booklet for contact information.

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*“If you think you can, you can. And if you think you can’t, you’re right.”* —Mary Kay Ash  
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## WHEN THEY’RE NOT YOUR RELATIVES

**47** Accept that your loved one, the person who is responsible for the person needing care, needs to focus more energy on giving care than you might like. Talk it through and agree to compromise. Be honest with your needs and be flexible. Care giving responsibilities take a lot out of your loved one.

**48** Treat the person needing care with warmth, respect, and dignity. Sometimes that means being more patient than your initial inclination.

**49** Show compassion for the care that is needed. It could be you or your loved one someday.

**50** Offer to take on some aspects of the care giving process, as appropriate. Sometimes the smallest (sincere) offers to help prove large in the midst of the “to dos” of giving care. Consider running errands, doing light cleaning, or recording a TV program.

**51** Understand that you may be the buffer your loved one needs to offset inevitable emotional “trigger switches,” especially if your loved one is a primary care giver. Parents and offspring (or other family members) tend to set these triggers for each other sooner or later.

**52** Encourage direct communication. Avoid serving as a go-between.

**53** Offer empathetic hugs, friendly phone calls at unexpected times, and allow your loved one to sleep late occasionally. This means more than expensive gifts during care times.

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*“You can’t deny laughter; when it comes, it plops down in your favorite chair and stays as long as it wants.”* — Stephen King  
.....



## TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

**54** Realize that caring for others includes caring for yourself. You have little energy for those who need you when you run out of fuel because you have not replenished your own tank.

**55** Notice that it may only take a few minutes' escape from the care giving situation to recharge and refuel. Make the escape as complete as possible.

- Go outdoors and take a few deep breaths.
- Close your eyes and feel your body release the tension within.
- Think a nice thought while your eyes are closed.
- Open your eyes, take a few more slow, deep breaths, and pause one more minute before going back to your care duties.

**56** Set aside pride and worry about imposing on someone. Let others help when they offer and their help does not cause you more stress than you already have.

**57** Squeeze what you can for yourself into your day—a phone call to a friend, a short read of inspirational words, soothing background music, or a brief electronic message exchange.

**58** Tell yourself and believe that you deserve to care for you as much as you need to care for others. Set limits in advance.

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*"Stop worrying about the potholes in the road and celebrate the journey!"*—Barbara Hoffman  
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## CARE CONSIDERATIONS: A CHECKLIST

- Talk to your client/family members to acknowledge everyone's needs.
- Compare their wants with your needs and abilities. Seek professionals where you need assistance.
- Check professionals' qualifications. Get second opinions.
- Put commitments in writing.
- Investigate whether health insurance covers needed services, supplies, equipment, or medications.
- Ask for emergency numbers in case the person needing care gets worse.
- Organize finances and get legal advice.
- Make a notebook to stay on top of information, commitments, contacts, and needs.
- Thank yourself. You put forth a great deal of energy to ensure your loved one receives needed care.
- After reviewing this checklist, feel free to contact House Calls or Springboard Training. See Resources for contact information.

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*"If we study the lives of great men and women carefully and unemotionally we find that, invariably, greatness was developed, tested and revealed through the darker periods of their lives. One of the largest tributaries of the River of Greatness is the Stream of Adversity."*  
 — Cavett Roberts  
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## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

### WORKSHOPS, SPEAKING, MEDIA

#### House Calls, LLC

18301 Darnell Drive, Olney, MD 20832

Phone: (301) 346-6732

E-mail: [callingonbeth@verizon.net](mailto:callingonbeth@verizon.net)

[www.callingonbeth.net](http://www.callingonbeth.net)

#### Springboard Training

PO Box 588, Olney, MD 20830-0588

Phone: (301) 260-1538

E-mail: [sylvia@springboardtraining.com](mailto:sylvia@springboardtraining.com)

[www.springboardtraining.com](http://www.springboardtraining.com)

### RESOURCES

#### The National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM)

[www.NASMM.com](http://www.NASMM.com)

#### Guide to Retirement Living

Senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes, home health care services, and professional resources in the Mid-Atlantic States.

Phone: (800) 394-9990

[www.retirement-living.com/](http://www.retirement-living.com/)

#### Meals on Wheels

Meal delivery to home-bound residents.

[www.mowaa.org](http://www.mowaa.org)

#### US Administration on Aging

Eldercare Locator helps people throughout the USA with issues including transportation, home care, and housing.

Phone: 1 (800) 677-1116

#### Maryland Lawyer Referral Service

[www.courts.state.md.us/family/lawreferral.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/lawreferral.html)

#### Grief Recovery Institute

Articles and resources for grieving people and those who care about them.

[www.Grief.net](http://www.Grief.net)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Beth Albaneze** is a certified practitioner with expertise in Rehabilitation Counseling, Therapeutic Recreation, Geriatric Care, and Integration Counseling. She is a part-time professor at Montgomery College (MD) teaching clinical courses in Mental Health. Beth was the Founder and Director of the Student Department of a statewide nonprofit company that served individuals with chronic mental illness and/or developmental disabilities. She is a consultant for Assisted Living facilities with senior populations, counsels at-risk youth, and assists individuals with head injuries or life traumas. Her mother-in-law lived with her family for more than 10 years, enabling Beth to understand firsthand the needs of sustaining a senior relative at home with adequate resources.

Beth has been recognized as Practitioner of the Year and Employee of the Year. She holds community service and departmental awards from organizations such as Best Buddies Inc., Maryland Parks and Recreation, National Society on Experiential Education, Montgomery County Police Department, and Maryland Association of Psychosocial Services, among others.



**Sylvia Henderson, MBA**, owner of *Springboard Training*—“*Your Springboard to Personal and Professional Development*,” provides programs and resources to individuals and organizations that focus on professionalism, leadership and work-life skills for success.

Sylvia has more than 20 years’ experience as a corporate trainer, team leader, and manager, practicing the leadership, communication, and motivational skills she now presents in her programs. Her business focus is on staff, supervisory, and management professional development.

Life balance and minimizing stress are important to Sylvia. While running a business, nurturing a family, volunteering, and squeezing in a hobby, she cares for her 90+ year-old mother who lives with her. Sylvia shares lessons she learned on her own and through working with Beth with hopes that your own journey is made lighter.



# NOTES AND RESOURCES YOU DISCOVER