

# Caring for a Disabled Parent

From Charlotte Gerber, former About.com Guide



Caring for an aging parent.

Caring for a disabled parent can present problems that adult children aren't always prepared for, such as caring for someone else's finances or arranging for care in the home or a nursing home. In some cases, the people who are helping to care for a disabled parent are still children under the age of 18. Caring for a disabled person, no matter what your age, can be a trying experience, but there are many resources and people willing to assist for those who ask for help.

## Adult Children Caring for Parents

One of the challenges that today's baby boomers face is preparing for their own retirement while caring for a disabled parent. Their parent's disabilities aren't always profound, but they are disabilities nonetheless. The types of disabilities that most often occur are broken bones, Alzheimer's disease, loss of eye sight, diabetes and arthritis in all of its many forms. Some individuals may also have cancer that requires long-term care.

Concerns range from trying to understand the **financial aspects** of caring for an aging parent to deciding what the best living arrangement for them is. Sometimes the situation becomes difficult if an aging person wants to keep their independence and doesn't want his or her child to make decisions about their life for them. For the adult child, deciding whether to place a parent in a nursing home, even temporarily, can generate feelings of guilt and create stress as well as place a strain on their relationship with their parent.

## Children Caring for a Parent

There are many diseases and conditions that can render an adult disabled while they still have children to care for under the age of 18. It is stressful enough to care for young children without having the added difficulty of a disability, especially if the condition was brought on suddenly.

Children who have a parent who is newly disabled may have problems adapting to the many changes that can occur. If they are very young and are used to their mother or father caring for them, it can be upsetting to suddenly not have the same type of support they enjoyed before. Perhaps their mother can no longer make their breakfast on demand, or their father may no longer be able to play ball with them outside. This change in family dynamics can cause feelings of anger, loneliness and frustration, especially if they are old enough to be

asked to assist their mother or father with daily activities. They may resent going from being the center of the family's attention to having their parent being the center of attention.

On the other hand, older children, especially teenagers, may surprise a disabled parent by being more than willing to adapt and take on additional responsibilities to assist them. The bond between parent and child may become stronger as a result of the two individuals having to rely on each other.

It is important, however, for parents to make sure they don't put too much of a burden on children who may not be old enough to understand "adult problems." While it may be alright to share certain aspects of being disabled, and basic information about a disease, too much information may be stressful to a child or young adult. When possible, a disabled parent should seek outside adult assistance, either from friends or family members, so that their children aren't overwhelmed by the responsibilities of caring for a disabled parent.

## Seeking Help When Needed

Many individuals need help with caring for a disabled parent or other family member, and support can be found in a variety of sources. The following are some of the many places that **support for caregivers** can be found:

- Local religious organizations
- Hospital outreach programs and support groups
- Support groups offered through various organizations and foundations for specific disabilities
- [Arc of the United States](#)
- [Disabled American Veterans organization](#)
- [Military](#) family support groups, such as [The Wounded Warrior Project](#)
- County Social Services Office, which can assist in locating support organizations for you
- Primary care physician and specialists
- Local counseling centers, including counselors at high schools for teenage [caregivers](#)

If you're beginning to feel overwhelmed caring for a disabled parent, don't hesitate to ask for help from any of these sources. There are people who are ready, willing and able to assist families that need a little, or a lot of help, caring for someone with a disability.

## Caregiver Resources

- [Coping With Stress](#)
- [Caring for a Caregiver](#)
- [Caregiving and Your Relationship - Caregiving for Aging Parents](#)

## Related Articles

- [AbilityPath Organization](#)
- [Book Review: Reflections from a Different Journey - What Adults with Disabi...](#)
- [Book Excerpt: Dr. Spock's Baby and Childcare 9th Edition - Read an Exce...](#)
- [Newly Single - Help for Separated & Divorced Parents](#)
- [Prepare Yourself Emotionally - Raising Adopted Children](#)