CARING FROM A DISTANCE OFFERS HOLIDAY TIPS FOR LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVERS WHO CAN’T BE THERE

Follow these steps to make the holiday season easier for you and a loved one who lives far away.

If you’re caring for an elderly parent or loved one who lives far away, you’re not alone. According to the National Institute on Aging, approximately 7 million adults are long-distance caregivers. And perhaps at no time is the challenge of long-distance caregiving greater than when you can’t be there for the holidays.

The following five tips can help to make the season more joyful, even if you are miles away.

1. Send a care package to be opened at the holiday table. Include the following: a one-page story detailing memories of a long-ago family vacation; a recent family photo; a sample, or recipe to share, of a favorite holiday food; a big thank you to the parents who loved you enough to send you forth into the big wide world.

2. Pre-schedule a time to call and speak with those gathered for the event. Make sure it does not come when everyone is eating or walking in the door.

3. Set a specific date for your next visit, and make appropriate reservations.

4. Arrange a conference call with family members and caregivers for after the holidays so you can get a status report and discuss “hot button” issues. Listen carefully to determine how you can assist from afar. Select an area to research so you can help those on the scene to identify options and investigate community resources that may not be apparent to them. Set a deadline for when you will report results.

5. Finally, take a deep breath, and stash your own feelings of guilt, worry, and frustration. By following the first four steps, you’ve opened doors of communication and taken real measures to prepare for future uncertainties.

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