FIVE TIPS FOR BETTER LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVER VISITS

No matter how far away you live, these strategies can help you improve the time spent with aging loved ones.

An estimated 6.9 million Americans are struggling to care for an aging parent or loved one who lives far away. Caring from a Distance (CFAD) recommends the five following tips to enhance your distance caregiver visits:

1. Spend some time each visit to collect precious details on your family history. Bring a camera, recorder, or notebook to capture faces, voices, and stories of the narrator(s). Ask specific name, date, and place questions about old photos of distant relatives in the family tree.

2. Make sure your loved has an at-a-glance emergency card in his or her wallet containing vital information: the names and numbers of physicians and emergency contacts, your loved one’s blood type, information about life-threatening allergies or conditions, critical insurance information, and medication doses and schedules. Share this card with all members of your loved one’s caregiver team.

3. Observe the interactions and behavior of those who spend time with your loved one. If paid home care workers are on the scene along with informal caregivers, invite all of them to write entries in a special notebook. A journal is a good way for multiple caregivers to share observations and important information that may be key to the well-being of your loved one. Start by entering a paragraph with details and dates of your own visit.

4. Take advantage of any scheduled trips to the doctor by discussing concerns with your parent (or other close family) before the appointment. Then prioritize questions and bring a pad to take notes on recommendations and follow-up. While in the office, check to see that your parent has granted authorization so that you or another member can be privy to needed test results.

5. Try not to swoop in and antagonize the local team. Your list may be long, the time may be short, and your suggestions may be exactly on point, but remember that the way you communicate will determine how effective you can be.

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