



## **Caring from Afar: Long-Distance Caregiving Handout**

Caring from afar is becoming more and more common. Caring from a distance is challenging. Travel and costs are common problems. Communication can also be hard when you are far away. Many who care from afar become stressed and defeated. You can overcome these challenges. You can set yourself up for success and manage these obstacles.

- How can you provide the best care possible to your long distance loved one while being kind to yourself? You need partners when you care from a distance. Often these are people who can provide care locally. It requires teamwork. The local care provider can be a family member. They can also be someone who lives nearby. They provide day to day care and support for your loved one.
- Developing a written plan is one tool. This can help caregivers plan for decisions needed when needs change or there is a crisis.
- Plan ahead. Think about who should be responsible for what. Start with your strengths. Consider what you are good at and how those skills might help in the current situation.
- It is important to have up to date facts and legal rights. This helps make financial and health care decisions for your loved one. Access is even more important for those handling care from a distance.
- Try to accomplish as much as possible when you visit in person. Find and arrange needed paperwork. Initial talk should be about finances.
- Find out if your Veteran loved one can sign documents. Find out if they can make phone calls to providers to give permission for you to pay their bills if needed. In the case your loved one can't make decisions a power of attorney should be completed.
- Creating a team is another key. There are many tasks that can be completed remotely. Some of these are paying bills and ordering prescriptions. People who care from afar need others to be their eyes, ears, and hands.
- It is important for team members to agree to provide care, and which tasks they will perform.
- Once roles and tasks are assigned, make a list of team member contact information. Keep it current as roles and needs change over time.
- Being in the communication loop may be needed at any time. It is best to set up for success from the start. Communicate often with the local care team and your Veteran loved one.



- Technology can be helpful to the care your loved one. Telehealth can be a wonderful tool. It lets long distance caregivers to be involved in talks and planning about health care. Other tools include conference calls, Face Time or Zoom. They may allow you to get care planning updates or to talk about changes or concerns.
- Tools such as cameras and tracking devices can help. Remote door locks, security systems can also keep your loved one safe. Dispensers that give medicine can stop errors. Make sure you get permission from your loved one or legal proxy for these devices. Keep in mind these tools can help, but do not fully replace face to face interactions.
- Visits in person allow you to see firsthand where more help is needed for your loved one. Visits are a chance to look for any signs of abuse or exploitation.
- Sibling tensions or resentments can get in the way of pulling together. This can get in the way of providing optimal care for your loved one. If this is the case, seek counseling or mediation to help work through these issues.
- Try to become assertive. Use direct communication to spell out what help you need. This could be financial help or a break from caring for your Veteran loved one.
- Enjoy time with your Veteran loved one, family, and friends when you visit. The quality time you spend together is key. They build close, loving, fun, and relaxing memories.
- There is a good tool for long-distance caregivers. It is called metta meditation. This means giving loving kindness toward others.
- The tasks of long-distance caregiving can lead to good things. It can make family and loved ones closer together. This is due to having to work together and talking more. Caregivers who live far away may end up visiting more. This can lead to a closer and more meaningful relationship.

You can be successful caring from a distance. Decide to plan, work with your team, and use the tools available and share loving kindness.