


 

Navigation Aid

You are in the  
**Disabilities  
Section**

Click for related topics:  
[Amputations](#) [Brain Injury](#)  
[Broken Bones](#)  
[Hearing and](#)  
[Sight Impairments](#)  
[and more...](#)

Caregivers Handbook

This 80+ page guide provides  
resources, checklists and  
worksheets - all in one place.



[Learn about the Caregiver's  
Handbook here.](#)

Caregivers Resources

Caregiving Basics

Caring for Yourself

Care Facilities

Checklists & Forms

Disabilities

Diseases

Emotional Issues

Employer Resources

End-of-Life Issues

Faith-based Resources

Glossary

Government Resources

Home Care

Housing Issues

Legal Matters

Long-Distance Care

Medical Care

Money Matters

Other Research

Real Estate

Transportation

Coping With Disabilities

*Coping suggestions for the caregivers of loved ones with disabilities.*

Common reactions to a permanent disability—whether it be your own or a loved one's—include anger, fear, grief, and shock. The extent to which an individual feels these emotions depends largely upon how much the disability will affect his or her life. The most important thing that you and your loved one can do is to remember that it's okay to feel these emotions, and it's even better to discuss them with people in similar situations or with professional counselors. Remember that everyone reacts to a disability differently—there is no right or wrong way to respond. Try to concentrate on what your loved one can do or how both of you can adapt to the change.

An individual with a disability often has to change where he or she lives or works, or how he or she travels or spends free time—and change isn't the easiest thing to deal with in the best of circumstances. Again, it's important to focus on what your loved one can do.

In general, there are some steps to take that can make your loved one's daily life a bit easier.

- The disability may affect one or more daily activities. In many cases, it's helpful to make a list of any special needs so that these can be addressed.
- Your loved one may take longer to complete certain activities. Understanding and planning for this extra time can be especially frustrating for a recently disabled individual who finds him or herself suddenly forced to incorporate extra time into a daily schedule. Your loved one may want to handle only important activities at first, and then slowly include other activities as he or she feels able to do so.
- Assistive devices may help your loved one to complete certain tasks. Many of these devices cost relatively little and insurance plans often will help pay the cost.
- If your loved one's mobility has been affected, ask a doctor to recommend an assistive device such as a wheelchair, battery-powered scooter, walker, crutches, or a cane.
- Daily living devices can make life much easier. Such devices include brushes with suction cups, "clapper" light switches, cutting boards for one hand use, door openers, garage door openers, holders (drink, utensils, etc.), one-handed can openers, portable phones, reachers, remote controls, scoop dishes, under-cabinet jar openers, and wheeled laundry baskets.
- Special arrangements made in advance can make travel more enjoyable. Such arrangements might include asking an airline for a seat in the front of the plane, arranging for assistance with baggage, requesting an "aisle chair" to help your loved one to an airplane seat, reserving rental cars with hand controls, making sure that hotels are accessible (you can also ask for a room that is fully accessible or minimally accessible), and checking with restaurants to make sure they fit your loved one's needs.

Effective Communication

Communicating with a loved one with a disability is much like communicating with anyone else. Generally, it's okay to talk about the disability if it comes up, and, just as in any other case, a relaxed conversation about mutual interests is always appreciated. Following are some communication tips that you might want to keep in mind.

- Always address your loved one before addressing the disability. He or she is an "individual with a disability," not a "disabled individual."
- Be patient if your loved one needs extra time to say something.
- Try to speak to your loved one at eye level. This is especially important for individuals suffering from hearing loss and those in wheel chairs.
- Avoid touching any assistive devices such as a guide dog or mobility device.
- Never insist on helping—only offer.
- Learn about your loved one's disability.
- Approach the situation with a positive, encouraging frame of mind.
- Accept help from local support groups and community services.

© Copyright FamilyCare America, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



**FamilyCare  
Real Estate  
Network™**

*Facing a family related real estate issue?*  
Information to assist with the legal, financial, logistical and  
emotional aspects of real estate and moving for seniors and boomers

**Click to Visit Our Real Estate Content**