

6 Caregiving Tools You Should Know About

From [WorkWell by Unum](#)

According to the [Family Caregiver Alliance](#), approximately 43.5 million caregivers have provided unpaid care to an adult or child within the last year. The economic value of their efforts is estimated at \$470 billion. Caregiving is selfless and done with an incredible amount of love and respect. It's also very difficult and challenging.

That's why caregivers need to know about resources to help make their responsibilities a little easier. Here are six to consider:

Your employer can offer support

If you're an employee in addition to your caregiving role, your employer may have programs in place to help you manage your caregiving responsibility. And you might not realize it because the programs aren't labeled "caregiving benefits."

1. **Leave of absences.** Many organizations offer leave of absence benefits — but all time off isn't paid. "A few things to keep in mind are the availability of leave and whether it's paid or unpaid," says Michelle Jackson, assistant vice president at Unum. "If you live in a state with paid leave for caregiving or your company offers it, then your leave could be paid. The Family and Medical Leave Act provides unpaid leave with job protection for caring for a family member."
2. **Wellness and well-being.** In addition to offering leave benefits, many organizations offer [employee assistance programs](#) that may include elder care or childcare referral resources. They might also have resources to help caregivers manage their own stress. Jackson encourages caregivers to ask for help and take advantage of all available resources.
3. **Management.** Whether your employer has many programs or none, there's another resource we often forget about: your manager. "I may be helpful to list out your caregiving needs and where you're having difficulty so when you speak to your boss, you're able to articulate what you need," Jackson suggests.

Increase your network with external resources

While employer support with our caregiving obligations is essential, external resources also can provide support and ideas.

1. **Caregiving organizations.** There are many caregiving programs and services. [AARP has an extensive resource library](#) on its website listing government agencies and nonprofits that can assist. The AARP site also has information on handling financial and legal issues for a care recipient, and a toll-free support line where you can speak with someone for help and guidance.
2. **The internet.** There's an amazing amount of information available online about caregiving. It does take some time to sift through all the information, but it can be worth checking out what's available. For example, the [Caregiver Action Network](#) has a video library where you can listen to fellow caregivers for hints and tips. And Unum recently released a [report](#) that details how caregiving is affecting different generations in today's workforce.
3. **Phone and tablet apps.** Sometimes all we need to alleviate the stressors around us is a little me-time or self-care. It might be a brain-teaser game like Sudoku or a mindfulness app like Headspace. Another option could be engaging in the newest relaxation technique, [a silent book club](#).

Being a caregiver is a big responsibility — but you don't have to do it alone. There are many resources both inside and outside our workplaces that can provide support by sharing a story, offering up some hints and tips, and getting our own creative ideas going.
