

# Helpful Equipment To Use While Caregiving

## State/Government Issued Photo ID

Once your person is no longer driving, take them to the RMV to get their driver's license turned into an official government issued photo ID. You will need it here and there.

## Emergency Packet

By convention, emergency people always look on or around the refrigerator in the kitchen for the important medical information. So, make sure it is there. We had a packet we kept with copies of everything: photocopy of photo ID and health insurance cards, list of diagnoses and medications including doses and timing, DNR or not, list of doctors and phone numbers, list of family and phone numbers. It is all right there for the emergency personnel, and for you, if you need to depart in a hurry.

## Baby Wipes and Disposable Gloves, Disposable Underwear (pull-ups)

Yup, you are going to need them. While you are at it, change all the slacks/pants/shorts over to ones with elastic waists, too. The gloves make it all easier to handle. (We always bought latex-free gloves so that everyone who came to help could use them.)

## Baby Monitor



You can dust off the one you used with your kiddos. Mine still worked after 20+ years. Set it up to listen in your person's room. Sometimes it is nice to just hear them breathing. [local drugstore, Wal-Mart, Babies-R-us]

## House Cleaning Service

If your person is not keeping things as tidy as they used to, they may need a little help. They will resist. It costs money. They won't like how it gets done. Hire a service anyway... even if they only come once a month. You can change the frequency as needed but get it started.

## Screw Driver and Basic Tools

Be prepared to think out of the box. We found we needed to remove the bathroom door to the master bathroom inside the parent's bedroom. The bathroom was pretty small. We had a hard time dancing around the door while trying to be helpful. All was so much better when the door was gone.

## Thermometer



Again, you can dust off the one you used with your kiddos.... I bought a new one because I really like the easy temple touch ones that are out these days. We didn't use it much but it was great when we needed it!! [local drugstore, Wal-Mart, Costco]

## Music – CD, Record, Cassette, Pandora, Cable Channel, ipod.....

Play music!!!! A variety of the kinds your person likes!

Play music: sometimes, all the time, on waking, on bedding, actually sleeping, while eating, anytime!! And SING!! Sing the songs they know best!! [They might even join in!]

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## Personal Backpack [keep your hands free to help your person]

Take it with you everywhere!!!! {But don't leave it in the car overnight.}

Pack well!!! – TODAY's pill strip (just in case you get delayed somehow), tissues, sunglasses, hat for weather, possible sweater, granola bars or other appropriate snacks for your person, water bottle, straws, photo ID, health insurance cards, copy of DNR (or not), personal medication list/schedule, names/numbers/addresses of doctors, baby wipes, disposable gloves, bum cream, underwear/pull-ups, slacks, socks, plastic bags for soiled pull-ups, plastic bags for soiled clothes, ....

Don't forget reading material, a water bottle, and chocolate for YOU!!!

## Basic Daily/Weekly Schedule

We all function better when we know when we are going to eat, when we need to take pills, and something about what we are going to do. There is freedom to live well within boundaries.

## “Overnight” Room

We turned the bedroom next door to the master bedroom into our “overnight” room. The designated person slept there and was the only one that had to get up to look in on the parents or answer their calls. The rest of us could sleep through.

## “Overnight” Log

Just a stenographer's note pad, and a pen that writes... At first, we logged times of waking and reason given, then we added drinks, up-chucking, bowel movements, attitudes, naps, readings on the finger pulse oximeter....whatever came up that we needed to know frequency.

## Finger Pulse Oximeter



Depending on the difficulties your person has, a finger pulse oximeter can save you trips to the doctor. It can help you to be well informed at the ER or doctor's office when you do need to go there. We needed to take a reading at specific times of day for weeks.

[local drugstore, Costco]

## Family Weekend Notebook

We had one big fat notebook with copies of everything for the family members who came to stay with the parents for the weekend/overnight so we could get away: a schedule for each day, medication list with photo of pills, photo of pills that are taken together, list of doctors with numbers, addresses, and driving DIRECTIONS, list of favorite stores, take-out restaurants with DIRECTIONS, church details and directions, directions for the laundry, senior center activities and directions... you get the idea....

## Pill Splitter/ Pill Crusher



Go ahead and grab them when you see a good price. It is more than likely you will need them at some point for a time.

[Wal-Mart, Dollar Store]

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## Ezy Dose One-Day-At-A-Time Weekly Medication Organizer Tray



Buy several. Arranging medications, including vitamins, for a couple weeks at a time makes it easier to reorder as necessary. The daily strips come out of the tray. This way a limited quantity of meds are handled on a daily basis by you, your person, or any aides you may have. [local drugstore or mail order]

## Time Warp Switch

You need to give your person permission to change from who they have always been and what they have always been able to do. This is really hard if it is your mom or dad. But, you need to flick your time warp switch to the other side so your expectations are not built on who your person used to be. They are not the same. You will only be frustrated and annoyed if you don't turn your mind around.

Yes, the previous person is in there, somewhere, bits and pieces.

But now, discover who they are and enjoy who is in front of you, minus the baggage.

It is way toooooo hard and toooooo much pressure to live dwelling on the "before."

## Clear Plastic Cup with a Lid and Straw



These cups are great for self-feeding as well as assisting. It is easy to see how much liquid is in the cup and you can tilt it to nearly horizontal without spilling. Colored straws may be easier for your person to see. The cups are simple to use if you need to measure liquid intake.

Most of cups are for cold liquids [Wal-Mart] but similar cups for hot liquids can be found [Bed Bath & Beyond].

## Bedding, Waterproof Mattress Pads, and Chuck Pads

One bed needs two of everything that is super easy to wash. We used disposable chuck pads and washable ones, in different places (bed, chairs, recliner, benches, seat in car..)

## Lockable Toolbox and Combination Padlock



We found it necessary to lock some items up to keep the parents safe: pills, car keys, sharp scissors, and kitchen knives.....

We used a padlock that allowed us to change the combination as needed which seemed much easier than passing keys around. [Lowe's]

## Polar Fleece Throws

Get the inexpensive ones but make sure they are unwoven, short pile polar fleece. They are good for covering those chuck pads on your furniture... and a quick warm throw that is super easy to wash!!

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## Handicapped Placard

At some point in the process, this could make the difference between going out or staying home. Getting out and about can be a real 'pick me up' for you and your person. Ask the primary care doctor to help you get a handicapped placard to make your life easier.

## GE Wireless Door Chime #19208 with Multiple buttons



We purchased several sets of boxes and buttons that were compatible with each other. We placed buttons around the house using COMMAND strips and Velcro - bathroom, recliner, bedside – within easy reach. At each location, the button was set for a different chime so we always knew which direction to head. We carried or set the 'speaker' boxes down near us. [Wal-Mart]

## Lift Chair



One of the best things we bought....even though Dad was unwilling, at first!!!! Make sure you go and try sitting in the various chairs with your person. They come in different sizes and shapes to suit different sizes and shapes. Pay attention to the control handle... some of them are pretty complicated. We looked for one that was only UP and DOWN.

We live in New England, so power chairs are at risk for getting stuck without electricity. We found one with battery back-up. [I am sure there are other good places but we went to **Letourneau's Pharmacy**, 349 North Main Street, Andover, MA 01810 phone: 978-475-7779]

## Nightlights / Flashlights / Headlamp

You might want to put nightlights around every corner so you can navigate easily without actually turning a light on and disrupting your night vision or waking your person while you are checking things out. [some have red lights that work well with night vision eyes.] Have flashlights/headlamp at every bedside table as well in case of a power outage.

## Hand-held shower head



Doesn't have to be fancy but you do want a diverter valve you can reach and an on/off knob near the spray end. You might want to use both changes in the process of a single shower. [Letourneau's Pharmacy]

## Tennis Balls – new or used

We carved holes in the tennis balls and put them on the feet of our chairs on the plain wood / linoleum floors. They made scooting the folks in and out from the table really slick!

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## Shower/Transfer Bench



What a great thing - Simple to use for with a shower or the tub, stable and adjustable for taller and shorter folks. Start sitting outside the shower to remove clothing then slide on in. You can figure it out for yourself or let the experts show you. [Letourneau's Pharmacy]

## Wheel Chair / Transport Chair [rent, buy, borrow from Senior Center]



(Transport Chair in Picture)

Wheel chairs have big wheels on the back so your person can propel themselves around. Transport chairs have small wheels all the way around so they must be pushed. We chose a transport chair because it is lighter weight and smaller for throwing into the car. Our person was not up to propelling themselves. Again, there are different sizes so go and test drive before you buy. [Letourneau's Pharmacy]

## Personal Medical Alert System

Shop around – they are all new with the advancing technology. Buy or Rent?

We bought the hardware for the system. It was easy to install and use. We had wrist buttons which could also be used as necklace fobs. There also was a smoke detector that was wired into the whole system. We made sure the service we used connected to real live people 24/7. We even practiced the routine with the parents several times. When the alarm goes off, the real live people in the call center could see the parent's information on a computer screen right away. They had a list of family to call or just notify 911. The parents never pushed the "button" but the smoke alarm did activate the alarm. The real live people were so nice... They spoke to mom through the speaker box, calling her by name and asked her what was happening and if everything was ok. She was burning muffins in the toaster oven. We took care of it because we were so close. After the smoke cleared and the alarm was off, the same real live person from the call center called back on the regular phone to see/hear that all was well. [mail order]

## Ramps



Easier than you think... We placed them in the garage to get up to the breezeway and then in the breezeway to get into the house.

It made using the transport chair seamless going from the car into the warm house.

[**AmRamp Corporate Headquarters**,  
202 W. 1st St. South Boston, MA 02127  
Phone: 888-715-7598]

## Sturdy Dining Room Chair with Strong Arms

Buying two new hefty wooden chairs, with good arms for leaning on and pushing up from, enabled the folks to come be part of the family by sitting at the dining/kitchen tables for months longer.

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## Safe Key Storage Box Combination Lock Home Security



We bought this so emergency folks could get in, as needed, if we were not right there. Also, paid/volunteer caregivers could get in if they came at the odd times when we were not home. [mail order]

## In-line Key Switch Solenoid for an Electric Stove

Mom had a gas stove but after she burned her apron we replaced it with an electric stove. We tried taking the knobs off but she then tried to use pliers or scissors to turn on the burners.

We wired an external on/off switch to the electric stove. Mom wanted to keep cooking but could not do so unsupervised. This way she could not turn the stove on without someone there with the key.

[We had an electrician install the solenoid and bought all the parts from him.]

## Motion Detector Bed Alarm



We needed to know when Mom was trying to sit up in bed. We bought the wall mount version. She hated it but it saved her from falling several times in her attempts to get up unattended. We play-acted as mom on the bed to test the action to get it right. Later, she learned if she wanted help all she had to do was raise her arm. It was great!! [mail order]

## Paid and/or Volunteer Aides

We hired a home health aide service especially for the bedtime routine. It gave us some relief and more time with our own children. Friends pitched in, too. Some of the folks were great and others we asked not to come back. One stole money from the parent's wallets. Most were careful and kind with our people. Some truly loved the parents and walked with us for a very long time.

## Friends, Family, Buddies in the Trenches - You need all these people!!

It is really hard to stay connected, and oh, so easy, to become isolated. You won't have the time to chat that you might have had before but your true friends will stick it out with you.

Family members might flock to help or flee in haste. Even if they are not coming in person, keep those phone calls and emails traveling. (Insert realistic reporting here.) Over time, when the parents could no longer handle their own phone calls, we would share these calls on speakerphone to manage the conversations between the far-away family members and the parents.

You will probably need to trim back on some of your outside activities at church or in the community. You will spend more face to face time with your person's friends than your own. Soon, your person's friends ARE your friends, as well.

Buddies in the trenches can be hard to find. The local Senior Center may be a good spot for your person for people contact/activities.....and a place where you may run into some buddies transporting their people. It is even more difficult to set aside time to share war stories and giggle over silly antidotes that only another buddy will really understand. Seize the moments as they show up!

**You can do this thing... it is only for a season.... Take care of yourself!!!!**