

Tip Sheet # 28



Dealing with New Responsibilities That I am Not Used To

You may be faced with doing tasks the stroke survivor did. Learning a new task such as doing the laundry or managing the checkbook may be difficult. Much energy and effort may be needed.

What about the new tasks I am faced with as a caregiver?

You may feel overwhelmed by the number of new things to do. **Perhaps one of the most important things to do is to include the survivor. Allow them to do as much as possible.** This will help you as a caregiver and will also give the survivor a sense of worth. (See Tip Sheet # 10 Dealing With the Stroke Survivor's Feelings About Himself or Herself).

- Try to reach agreement with the survivor on what they can do and what the caregiver can do. Try to work together as a team.
- Openly discuss how both the survivor's role and the caregiver's role has changed. Ask the survivor about his or her feelings. Share your feelings.
- Try to create a "new normal." Talk about what the survivor can do to adjust to his or her new role. Talk about what the caregiver can do to adjust to his or her new role. How can you help one another?
- **Ask family and friends for help.** See Tip Sheet #29 Finding the best way to ask family and friends for help. Give them specific things to do. Accept offers for help.
- It may help to write down the different tasks you need to do.

- Financial activities – banking, insurance, paying bills, balancing the checkbook (**See Tip Sheets #22 & #23**).
- Homemaking activities – laundry, housecleaning
- Meal preparation – buying groceries, cooking, washing dishes
- Transportation – car maintenance, driving, getting gas (**See Tip Sheet #25 Going places with the survivor**).
- Home maintenance – lawn care, home upkeep
- Have a system so you know when things need to be done.
 - Mark bills and appointments on a calendar. Keep a detailed calendar for activities and things to do.
 - Set aside certain days for certain tasks.
- Do the best you can. Don't be afraid to try new things.



- Keep a sense of humor. You won't be the only person to ever have pink underwear or overdone food - just ask a college student or newlywed!
- Once you learn to do new things, you will feel a sense of accomplishment.
- You don't have to do it all.
 - Ask for help from family or friends. When someone says, "Let me know if I can help." ... Give them something to do NOW! Don't wait. Pin them down now to get things done.
 - If possible, pay to have some things like housecleaning or mowing done. **Ask friends and family to suggest businesses they have found to be reliable.** Mechanics, plumbers, automotive stations, household help, all these are best found by word of mouth from others. Be sure to check references on the quality of their work.
 - Look for ways to involve your survivor.

- Make sure that your expectations are realistic in terms of your new responsibilities. Visit **Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB3. Maintaining realistic schedule and expectations.**
- Take your time. As a wise sage once said, “The dirt isn’t going to go anywhere.”

How can I as a caregiver learn more about the new tasks I have?

- It is important to ask questions about things you do not know how to do.
- Talk with the experts!
 - Banks will help you learn to manage a checkbook.
 - Your insurance agent can explain your coverage.
 - The cooperative extension service in your county can give you ideas on lawn and yard care.
- Ask your stroke survivor for ideas. Think of approaching this change as a team.



When do I as a caregiver need to contact a professional about the new tasks I have?

- When you have no clue about what to do, call an expert.
- When you are frustrated trying to learn a new task, ask a pro for tips.
- When you need someone to do something that is not safe for you to do (e.g., cleaning the gutters).
- If the new tasks combined with caring for your survivor are pushing you over the edge, call a counselor.

Where can I find more information about doing new things as a caregiver?

- Look for community education classes. Some home improvement stores or hardware stores offer “how to” classes.
 - car maintenance for women
 - home maintenance
 - financial management
- Home improvement or hardware stores may also know of a “handyman” who can help. **It may be better to hire a handyman who is employed by a business who will guarantee their work.**
- How-to-Books from libraries, bookstores, or hardware stores
- Stroke support groups (See **Tip Sheet #8 Where to find resources**)
 - Stroke Support Family Network at 1-888-478-7653
 - Ask for the Stroke Family “Warmline”
- Caregiver support magazines or websites (See **Tip Sheet #8**)
 - Stroke Connection Magazine 1-888-478-7653 or online at www.strokeassociation.org
 - Today’s Caregiver Magazine 1-800-829-2734 or online at www.caregiver.com
- See **Tip Sheet #8 Where to Find Resources** for a variety of other resources, such as aging and disability resource centers in your area:
 - Eldercare Locator (800) 677-1116 or <https://eldercare.acl.gov>
 - United Way 211 (dial 211 or <https://www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211>).

