



Balancing Career and Caregiving

So you finally got the job of your dreams; you're moving up the corporate ladder, opening up your own business or becoming well known in your field. Suddenly, you're confronted with the needs of an aging relative. What do you do?

You'll need to look at the work that you do as a caregiver as another job, with all of the responsibilities that go along with a second job. But this does not mean that your career has to suffer. If you're organized and flexible, you'll be able to fit in your personal life with your working life, balancing the demands of each.

Find Help

Finding help—home health care, homemaker services, friends, family, and neighbors—can be a lifesaver if you are trying to balance a career with your role as a caregiver. Look for help everywhere you can, including through social and community services, meals-on-wheels programs, transportation programs and senior centers. Don't think that if you get help, you are a failure as a caregiver; in fact, it just shows what a dedicated caregiver you are.

Evaluate Your Career Choice

If you find that your role as a caregiver conflicts too much with your career, you might need to make some hard choices about your career. Does your job ask you to travel too much? Are you unable to find the time simply to get home and sleep, let alone provide care for someone else? It might not be the easiest thing to do, but you may want to consider alternative careers—or at least another job within the same field.

Flextime

More and more jobs allow for "flextime"—a term referring to flexible hours or flexible schedules. Flextime is particularly desirable for caregivers, since you never know when you will be needed and for how long. Flextime arrangements are usually based on the principal that the most important thing is that you get the job done—not that you sit at your desk from 8 to 5. Talk to your boss to see if flextime is an option.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting—the use of the telephone, computer and other telecommunications devices to stay in touch with the office while working at home—is a growing trend for today's workforce. Caregivers can use this trend to their advantage, since it allows flexibility in where you do your work. Depending on the needs of your job, you may telecommute for several days a week, or you may telecommute full-time. Evaluate the work that you do, and put together a telecommuting proposal for your boss. It may help to ease the tensions between your career and your caregiving, and allow you to visit and care for your elder at their need and your convenience.