

How to Involve Teens in Basic Family Caregiving (and Why You Should)

You get an extra pair of hands, they get a learning experience.

By

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Alerts

For many older adults, the high costs of assisted living and other long-term care facilities, as well as home health aides, are financially out of reach. Others may be able to afford that type of care, but prefer living with family members, or have lived in multi-generation homes their entire life. And some are able to continue to live on their own, but need some occasional assistance with certain tasks.

Whatever the reason, this scenario is not uncommon for members of the “sandwich generation,” who balance parenting and caring for older family members. Every situation is different, but parents of teens have the unique opportunity to get a some help with their caregiving responsibilities, while providing their kids with a learning opportunity. Here’s what to know.

How to get teens involved in basic caregiving

No one is suggesting that you enlist your teen in the more challenging aspects of caregiving. But according to the AARP, there are several ways to get them involved that not only takes something off your own plate, but also teaches them important life skills, while giving them the chance to spend more time with an older relative, *and* respecting everyone’s needs.

Here are a few of the AARP's suggestions:

Assisting with technology

As digital natives, today's teens have never known a life without the internet, computers, social media, and in some cases, smartphones. Put their skills to work, having them set up tablets, smart devices, or other technology, and then walk their older relative through how to use them.

Cooking and/or meal prep

Most teens are capable of cooking—though you may need to teach them the basics, first. If they're not to the point of being able to prepare simple meals on their own, they can at least help with meal prep, like washing and chopping vegetables, doing dishes that are already in the sink, and getting any equipment or tools required to make the meal out onto the counter and ready to go.

Household chores

Again, most teens are more than capable of doing household chores like vacuuming, laundry, shoveling snow, and wiping down surfaces in the kitchen and bathroom. Whether these are tasks performed specifically for the older relative, or ones that benefit the entire household, the more they're able to get done, the more time it frees up for their parent, allowing them to take on their other caregiving responsibilities (or maybe even have a rare moment to themselves).