



# Planning a Successful In-home Respite Visit

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MURRUMBIDGEE

An Australian Government Initiative



## Taking care of yourself

Being a full-time carer for someone with a serious illness comes with its rewards and challenges. It is important that as a carer you look after your own health, and continue to undertake activities that revitalise you and give you pleasure. However, carers often worry about leaving their loved one with someone else, even for a short period of time. Carers can be concerned that their loved one will become distressed with them gone and that the visitor won't know how to manage issues that may arise. This simple guide was developed to support carers to arrange a successful in-home respite visit that is enjoyable, both for your loved one and the visitor as well.

## Planning ahead

Preparation is the key for a successful in-home visit, for both the loved one and visitor. You know your loved one best and how early to talk to them about the fact that you will be going out for a bit. Some people may need a few days' notice and frequent reminders. For others it may be best to talk to them just before the visitor arrives. You are the best judge. When considering whom to ask to come, think about who your loved one naturally enjoys spending time with. Sometimes men enjoy the company of another man. Ask your loved one



about whose company they enjoy the most and think about who may have the time available. You may need to be proactive and ask someone to come and visit with your loved one, as sometimes people don't offer for fear of intruding.

## Loved one reluctance

Some care recipients are resistant to people coming into the home. They may see it as an invasion of their privacy or a sign of their loss of independence. Sometimes loved ones can feel offended, and think that you are organising to have them 'babysat'. It is best to slowly introduce the idea and try to reassure them that this is not the case. Here are some tips to help your loved one feel more comfortable about in-home respite:

- Explain that you enjoy other people visiting and it is likely they would as well.
- Listen closely to their concerns and express your understanding of those feelings.
- Explain that 'this is for me, you know how I worry, and I know you don't need the help'. This approach can help your loved one maintain their sense of dignity.
- 'The nurse or doctor' said that we should give this a try. A professional's opinion may be more acceptable.
- Explain that a friend has asked when they could come and visit.

## Planning activities

Carers report that visits run more smoothly when an activity for the visit has been planned. Think about the interests and activities that your loved one enjoys. Here are some ideas below. These can be tailored to suit your loved one's interests and level of functioning.

- Sitting on the patio, having morning tea and catching up
- Manicures, hand massage, talking together
- Listening to favourite music
- Having lunch together
- Going for a drive and looking at places that your loved one has a connection to or fondly remembers
- Watching a favourite movie or recorded TV show
- Jigsaw puzzles, cards and other games
- Looking at old photo albums and reminiscing
- Reading to them from a favourite book, a library book or the newspaper
- Looking at the garden and spotting the birds
- Craft activities
- Simple baking e.g. scones or slice
- Going for a walk, perhaps with the dog
- Looking at old magazines or newspapers, especially those from their younger years e.g. old copies of Women's Weekly or The Weekly Times
- Gardening tasks e.g. potting up some succulents or watering the plants



## Other preparations

It is a good idea to ensure that all medications, personal care and toileting tasks have been seen too, just before the visitor arrives.

## Preparing the visitor

It is important to prepare the visitor as well, such as providing information on:

- What sort of day your loved one is having e.g. bit distracted, tired, or and has been looking forward to the visit because...
- What activities or tasks you have planned for them
- The location of food and drinks
- What strategies to try if your loved one became upset
- What to say when they ask where you are or when you are returning
- Under what circumstances they should phone you for advice
- What to do in an emergency

## Upon your return

Check in with the visitor and ask how the visit went:

- Were there any issues?
- Was the visit too long or too short?
- What could be done differently next time?
- Enquire how your visitor felt about how the time was spent.
- Do they seem like they might wish to come again?
- If they offer, accept their offer and let them know that you will get back to them about a suitable time.
- Let them know how valuable you found the opportunity to go by yourself for a while.

Check in with your loved one:

- Did they enjoy the visit?
- What worked well and what didn't?
- What could you change to improve the next visit?

It may be a case of a bit of trial and error, while you learn what works best for both the visitor and your loved one. It is worth persisting, as we know that those who are unwell and spend most of their time at home, can end up with very few new experiences and opportunities to socialise with others. It is also important for you as a carer to remain connected with your friends and spend time doing things just for yourself.



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For carer assistance, contact:

**Carer Gateway Contact Centre**

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