Things you can do for a family caregiver
Compiled by Mary Frances De Rose and the VESTA Project Caregivers

1. Walk the family dog
2. Assemble a family photo album
3. Ask the caregiver what you can do.
4. Visit with the care recipient for a couple of hours so the caregiver can get some uninterrupted sleep.
5. Change the ceiling light bulbs
6. Tend to the caregiver’s backyard
7. Give a gift certificate for a day at the spa . . . and arrange substitute care
8. Cook an extra main dish when you are making dinner for your own family
9. Shovel snow, rake leaves
10. Stop by your friend’s home en route to the store and see what they need
11. Stop by with a special treat
12. Get the local churches to present programs on family caregiving
13. Start an area volunteer respite program
14. Rent a movie and offer to return it
15. Pick-up/return library books . . . . . also works for dry cleaning
16. Take the kids for the night/weekend
17. Buy an extra bus pass when you are buying your own
18. Offer to drive any/all the family to church/synagogue/mosque
19. Arrange for a hairstylist to visit the family
20. If you are handy, offer to do little maintenance chores around the house once a month
21. Ask the caregiver to put your telephone number(s) on speed dial and remind him/her to use it . . . anytime day or night
22. Make “Things to remember to tell the doctor” blank forms
23. If at all possible, invite the family to dinner at your home
24. Take the caregiver (and the care recipient) to the museum (call ahead if special accommodations are necessary)
25. Arrange for a home massage for the caregiver
26. Construct a reminiscence box
27. Find out about technologies that will lessen the burden on the caregiver and increase the independence/happiness of the care recipient
28. Get a list of area caregiver support groups and pass them along to the caregiver . . . . . and offer to stay with the care recipient
29. Learn all you can about the care recipient’s illness
30. Arrange to pay for a premium cable channel
31. Offer to do pharmacy runs and/or arrange for delivery
32. Do the family laundry when you come over to visit
33. Hire a housecleaning service and get the caregiver/care recipient out of their home for the day
34. Hire an environmental specialist to evaluate the safety of the house and arrange for necessary modifications
35. Offer to run interference with building code department/home owner associations if family needs to modify their home
36. Go to the neighborhood police precinct and register/set up an ID tag program
37. Buy a CD of the caregiver’s/care recipient’s favorite music
38. Tape the caregiver’s/care recipient’s favorite TV shows
39. Buy food staples and stock the family pantry
40. Give caregiver a cell phone for emergencies
41. Send a magazine/journal subscription to the caregiver
42. Keep a gentle eye out for signs of depression in the caregiver (neglect of self, neglect of care recipient)
43. Make sure the caregiver gets to his/her own doctor & dentist
44. Depending on the situation, remind the caregiver of good times past/present/future
45. Buy the caregiver a hat . . . or some other symbol that represents getting out of the house
46. Get the local media to highlight a caregiving story in the news
47. Establish a daily/weekly ‘phone ritual’ with the caregiver as a safety check
48. Allow/encourage the caregiver to rant . . . with no sugar-coating allowed
49. Remember not to count on health care professionals to be proactive and make sure the family’s needs are being met (i.e. – make no assumptions)
50. Contact health care professionals and let them know what they are doing well and how they can improve their practices
51. Mix generations/caregivers . . . have babies visit home-bound elderly and have elderly visit sick kids
52. Collect catalogs for home shopping needs
53. Do whatever you can do to enable caregiver to take vacations
54. Take the caregiver and/or care recipient for day trips
55. Accompany the caregiver and care-recipient to the doctor and hospital as a show of support and stay at the hospital with the patient
56. Marshall any necessary forces to get insurance coverage for required services
57. Bring a ‘no occasion’ picnic lunch
58. Wash and vacuum the family car
59. Arrange for a care service
60. Remember care recipient’s hobbies and interests
61. Encourage the caregiver to set up a web page (or do it yourself) so he/she doesn’t have to constantly repeat answers to the same questions
62. Offer to take the family car in for routine maintenance
63. Buy supplies for the caregiver’s long-standing hobbies
64. Encourage the caregiver to develop new hobbies
65. Make a restaurant reservation: 1) for the caregiver and care recipient, 2) for the caregiver and a friend, or 3) arrange to have restaurant deliver a special meal to the home
66. Give gift certificates that have cash-in value (as a way of helping the family out financially without embarrassing them)
67. Research/hire professional care managers who can ‘do’ a consult
68. Acknowledge/recognize small gains
69. Do post office runs
70. Schedule/do seasonal (routine) home maintenance when you do your own – boiler, plumbing, gutters
71. Send a food basket
72. Make a donation to specific ‘illness’ association in family’s name
73. Observe the caregiver and come up with one simple thing that will make his/her life easier
74. Learn about the caregiver’s faith tradition
75. Arrange for a manicure/pedicure – or do it yourself
76. Clip coupons for caregiver needs
77. Become familiar with ADA rules/rights/regs/responsibilities
78. Take caregiver along for your routine tasks
79. Encourage the caregiver to sign up for an on-line course and come by to ‘sit’ while he/she ‘attends’ class or studies
80. Arrange pizza delivery on special game night
81. Silently sit with the caregiver in solidarity and love

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