

January Senior Sense: New Year New You?

By Liz O'Donnell

<https://workplace.care.com/>

While the celebrations this New Year's Eve will be tempered, the feelings as the clock heralds 2021 will be dramatic. The end of 2020, the year consumed by a global pandemic and so much other strife, is reason to celebrate – even alone and in a mask.

But as a caregiver, when your feet hit the floor on the morning of January 1, not much will be that different actually. You will still need to keep your distance from family and friends. You, and the people you care for will most likely not be inoculated yet against COVID-19. And the stress from fear, isolation, and the overwhelming logistics associated with coronavirus will still be present.

But something else will be present too: hope. While it will likely still be months before lockdowns are lifted at senior living facilities, and we can hug the people we love, and return to the activities that brought us normalcy, security and joy, we have hope. Use that hope to guide you in the coming months as you ride out the pandemic. Let it be the inspiration you need to continue to balance your many responsibilities. Here are some suggestions for using the new year, and the promise of better days to come, to guide you as a caregiver.

Get organized.

The new year is a perfect time to review financial, medical and legal documents and plans both for you and for the people you take care of. Make an appointment to talk to a financial planner and be sure your money is working as hard as it can for you. Someday, hopefully sooner rather than later, we will socialize again. Are you saving for some good times while securing your long term care needs?

Take inventory of your paperwork and make sure you are set up for success. Do you have power of attorney, health care proxies, and advanced directives for the people you are responsible, and also for you? Do you have a will?

Think long term.

Speaking of wills, do you know the end of life wishes for the people you love? And, do the people who love you know what your wishes are? Those conversations were fraught in 2020, but we are all acutely aware of how quickly things can change. Understanding what matters most in difficult times as well as good times is a gift, so don't be afraid to initiate those discussions.

Get healthy.

While you're taking inventory of paperwork, take stock of your health too. If better days are on the horizon, are you positioned to enjoy them? Make a start and stop list of habits and behaviors that will lead you to your healthiest self. Maybe you need to stop the extra sugar you've been comfort-snacking on since last March and start a multivitamin. Caregiving stress takes a toll in the best of times. No doubt we can all use a tune up after the past year.

Dream.

The pandemic has shown us what matters most in life and what parts of our routines were superfluous. Take some time to daydream about your best life and then take steps to make it a reality. Yes, you have responsibilities – people who rely on you and bills to pay. Still, you can infuse joy into even the most mundane day. Use the hope that comes with the new year to dream big and the quiet of the coming months to create a realistic action plan to move you in the direction of what you want.

Happy new year.

Liz O'Donnell is the founder of [Working Daughter](#) and the author of [Working Daughter: A Guide To Caring For your Aging Parents While Making A Living](#). For caregiving support, information and resources contact a Senior Care Advisor at Care.com. We are master's-level social workers specializing in adult and senior care. Call us today at (855) 781-1303 x3 or email questions to careplanning@care.com

