

A Gift Guide for the Caregivers in Your Life

<http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/info-2016/family-caregivers-gift-guides-ag.html?intcmp=CRC-FEED>

by [Amy Goyer](#), December 15, 2016

Want to give [a family caregiver](#) a meaningful present? I've been a caregiver for various family members for more than 35 years, and I would be happy to receive any (or all!) of these items. Here are some ideas for gifts that might be helpful or encouraging for the caregivers in your life.

[Find more activities, recipes and games in the AARP Leisure Newsletter](#)

1. Relaxation

- **Aromatherapy diffuser and lavender essential oil.** Some people find lavender effective as a sleep aid. I like the ultrasonic diffusers that use water to diffuse the oil into the air. Make sure a diffuser can be used safely (with a wide, stable base that won't topple over easily), has the option to run without bright lights and can run continuous mist all night (eight to 10 hours).
- **A hot bath.** Make a package of bath salts, oils and lotions with a note encouraging the caregiver to take a relaxing bath before bed.
- **Sound machine, apps, CDs or MP3 recordings.** White noise or nature sounds can help calm the mind or drown out distracting noises. Meditation and self-hypnosis apps and CDs can also be calming. I go to sleep with Andrew Johnson's Deep Sleep app every night, and I play it for my dad, too. Others to consider are Pzizz, and Relax and Sleep Well by Glenn Harrold.
- **Alarm and notification gadgets.** It's important for us to feel confident that even if we sleep soundly, we will wake up if needed. Useful products include floor-mat alarms, bed- or chair-pad alarms, motion-sensor alarms, door alarms, audio monitors and video camera monitors. Find out more about these and other gadgets in my article "10 Must-Have Gadgets for Caregivers."

2. A Break

- **Healthy and tasty meal delivery services.** Some options, such as Blue Apron, Hello Fresh, Peach Dish and Sun Basket (which features organic and non-GMO ingredients), deliver all the ingredients for a meal with cooking instructions. You can order prepared meals for delivery from companies like Freshly, Factor 75 and FitZee Foods.

Caregivers & Caregiving

- [Caregiver support groups offer valuable help](#)
- [5 signs you need a caregiver](#)
- ['Acts of Kindness' winners](#)
- **Paid care.** It's best to let the caregivers in your life choose their own paid care providers (AARP's "Find Senior Care Near You" tool can help), but you might pay the bill — even for just a few hours.
- **Your time as a caregiving assistant or researcher.** Offer to take care of loved ones for a period of time or, if you're not comfortable providing care by yourself, offer to come by and assist. It can be a huge help to have an extra pair of hands. At a distance? Offer to research health conditions and treatments, find the best price for caregiving supplies, shop online for clothing or order groceries to be delivered. You could also do some research to find free or affordable ongoing respite care or adult day care by contacting the local area agency on aging.
- **Fun motivation.** Make a gift of a spa day, massage, mani-pedi, movie or theater tickets, garden tour, wine-and-paint date or round of golf — whatever the caregivers in your life enjoy. If they have tickets, a gift certificate or a date to look forward to, they might actually make the time to follow through. (It's nice to also help arrange respite care.)

3. Comfort and Joy

- **Treats of the month clubs.** From snacks or cookies to meat and cheese to wine, it's always a lift to get something yummy in the mail.
- **Coffee shop gift card.** I can attest that sometimes the most warm and fuzzy, positive experience in my day is simply getting a good cup of coffee or tea.

- **Cheerful flowers.** Flower delivery makes us all feel special. (Fresh flowers might be better for some than a plant that requires a lot of time and attention.)
- **Cards of encouragement.** Send caregivers a greeting card every week or month that expresses your admiration, appreciation and faith in them. Try GreetingCardUniverse, CafePress or Senior Shower Project.
- **A funny book or movie.** Laughter is good for the body and soul. Think about the caregivers' taste in humor, of course — they may not laugh at the same things you find funny.
- **Your companionship.** It may sound sappy, but having someone to vent to, brainstorm with and hug us when we are tired or sad is worth a million bucks.

A note on what not to give caregivers:

- Anything that will wind up costing us more time or energy, or that is unrealistic for us to use. For example, don't get us a digital picture frame that means we have to find time to organize photos and download them to the frame — it will never happen. (On the other hand, a frame with photos already downloaded would be great.)
- Anything that requires assembly — unless you (or someone you hire) will put it together for us.
- And please don't get us a fantastic weeklong vacation if we can't take that much time away from caregiving. (If we can, however, by all means go for it!)

But honestly, even the smallest gift, if it shows you care for the caregiver and appreciate the effort they're making for their loved one, is a beautiful thing.

[Amy Goyer](#) is AARP's family and caregiving expert and author of AARP's [Juggling Life, Work and Caregiving](#).

She spends most of her time in Phoenix, where she is caring for her 93-year-old dad, Robert, who has advanced Alzheimer's disease. Follow her blog and videos and connect with Amy on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). For ongoing caregiving support from Amy and AARP, text "AMY" to 97779
