



11

**Unique Skills**  
You Need to Become  
**A Caregiver**

Caregivers make a true difference in the lives of their patients and their families. But not everyone is cut out for the job. Caregivers must master a whole list of qualities and skills in order to be successful and provide the best client care possible. Discover 11 unique skills you need to become a caregiver below.

## Compassion

Showing compassion means being able to tune in to other people's distress and feeling a desire to alleviate it. This attribute is first on the list. Because many home health clients are in distressing and even painful situations.

Recovering from surgery.

Losing their memory to Alzheimer's.

Other miscellaneous situations.

As a result, being caring and empathetic is an absolute must-have in terms of qualities for caregivers. Compassion may not be a "hard" skill the way clinical know-how or time management is, but it's no less vital to caregiver work.

## Communication

Caregivers must have excellent communication skills, both written and verbal. Even if your client isn't able to communicate through the traditional means of speaking and writing. You will need to interact with their family members or other caretakers. This is important to discuss their care and updates to their condition. You will also need to interact with:

Doctors.

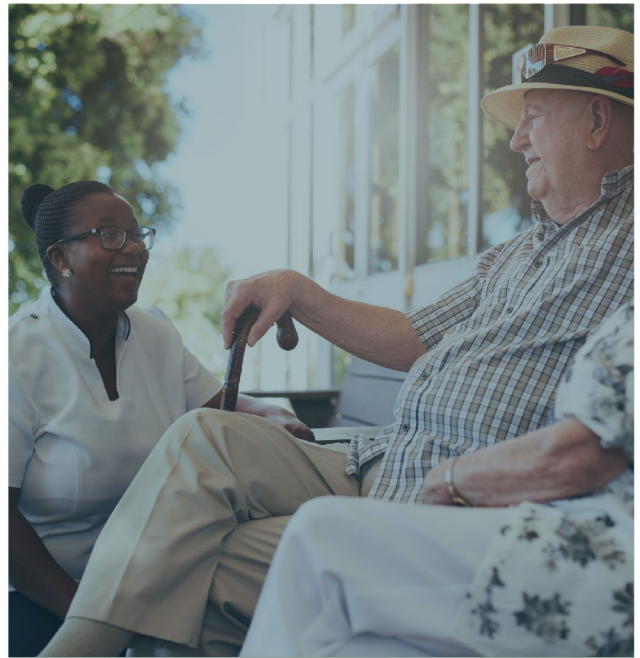
Nurses

Other Medical Professionals.

This will be necessary to possibly relay their instructions back to the patient and/or family as well.

## ■ Observation

It's not just enough to talk with or even listen to your patients. Sometimes, they may not be able to articulate what's going on with their health. Or they may even try to actively hide something from you if they are afraid of revealing any deterioration in their condition. During your home visits and other interactions, you'll need to keep a sharp eye out for any changes in your patient's condition. It will be important to make a note of them in your report. Staying aware of the client's environment is also important. You will also want to take care of potential hazards for tripping, fire, etc.

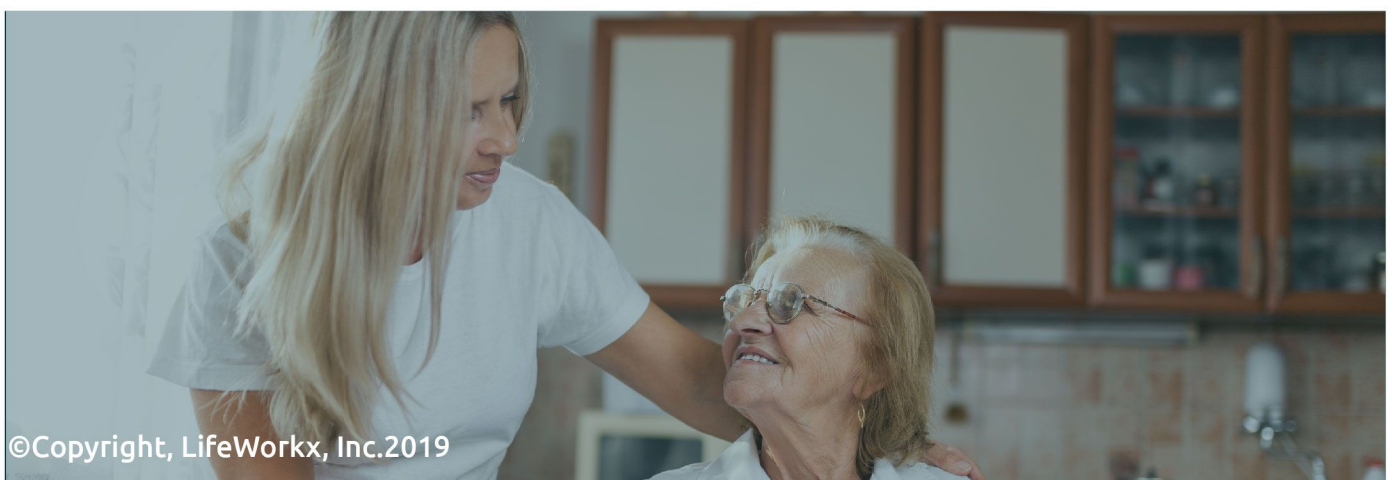


## ■ Interpersonal Skills

Working as a caregiver is a very social job, and you'll basically be interacting with people all day. You don't have to be an extrovert to work as a caregiver, but it certainly does help. Having a high level of social skills will go a long way towards helping you establish rapport, build trust and otherwise nurture a strong, open relationship with your clients. These interpersonal skills will help not just you but your clients as well, as many home health patients can feel isolated. Interacting with a caregiver can help dispel some of those feelings of loneliness.

## ■ Time Management

Even if you work for a caregiver agency, you're largely your own boss when it comes to managing your time and making sure that everything gets done in a shift. As such, you'll need to be able to prioritize tasks, work efficiently and avoid getting bogged down in overly time-consuming duties when time is short.



## ■ Organization

Do you know where everything is in your nursing bag? What about important medications in your client's house? Having a place for everything, and everything in its place—as the saying goes—is very important for caregivers, especially in the unfortunate event of an emergency. When seconds count, you want to be able to lay your hands on exactly what you need. Also, check out this organizational planner to help you keep everything important in one place.



## ■ Cleanliness

Especially if the client is elderly, many caregivers help out with light housekeeping during their visits, such as doing laundry or mopping. (Heavy-duty tasks such as moving furniture, cleaning carpets or mowing the grass are outside the scope of work though.) Even if you don't keep your own home as neat as you want to, you'll need to be able to clean your patient's house until it's up to scratch. This standard also applies to personal hygiene, as you'll likely need to help your client bathe and get dressed.

## ■ Patience

Most home health clients are dealing with challenges of one type or another: significant mental and/or physical ailments, limited communication abilities and more. Clients may be irrational or critical (or both), require cleanups after accidents and otherwise lead to some frustrating situations. Caregivers need to remain calm in these scenarios, so having a near-unflappable personality is really important for successful patient care.

## ■ Flexibility

Because a patient's condition can change from day to day, so can your work as a caregiver. No two shifts or home visits are the same, and caregivers need to have a flexible mindset so they can handle these changes with grace. This flexibility also extends to the scheduling, as caregivers rarely work regular business hours (after all, patients aren't confined to Monday through Friday, 9-5).




## ■ Initiative

Caregivers often work by themselves in the patient's home. Obviously, they'll have instructions from doctors and nurses to follow in terms of wound care, medications, etc. but home health care is different from other medical environments because you don't have a doctor signing off on your every move. Therefore, caregivers need to be comfortable being proactive, making informed decisions and taking action in an emergency.

## ■ Physical Strength and Stamina

Caregivers perform a variety of physical tasks, from carrying groceries to vacuuming to lifting patients. No matter what they do, caregivers are often on their feet for long periods of time, sometimes almost their entire shift (which is why wearing comfortable nursing shoes is so important!). Having a baseline level of physical strength and stamina is important to maintaining your own health and that of your clients.

## ■ Conclusion

A photograph showing a caregiver in green scrubs standing and assisting an elderly woman with white hair who is seated in a wheelchair. The caregiver is holding the wheelchair's handle, and both are looking towards the right. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Not just anyone can, or should, become a caregiver but if you've got these 11 qualities, then you might be a great fit for the job. And if you're currently looking for a caregiver to take care of your loved one, keep this list in mind as you review candidates. Another great resource for caregivers is The Ultimate Caregiving Expert. She makes caregiving possible for busy entrepreneurs. She is a Caregiving Expert that provides Virtual Assistant & Coaching Services to help lighten the load of entrepreneurs who are trying to run their business while taking care of a loved one. Taking care of your business and taking care of your loved one should be a top priority. Schedule your planning session with her so she can look at how to keep your life and your business running smoothly.