

FREE Caregiver Survival Checklist

By Meredith Glynn

The Porch Light Caregiver Starter Checklist

7 Things to Do This Week When Caregiving Feels Overwhelming. A free resource from Meredith Glynn, Author of When Caregiving Changes Everything. "The man who once held my hand when I was small and learning how to walk through the world. Now it is my turn to hold yours."

A Note Before You Begin

If someone handed you this checklist, chances are you are in the middle of one of the hardest seasons of your life. You may be exhausted. Overwhelmed. Unsure where to even start. You may be coordinating doctor appointments, medications, insurance calls, and home health services while still trying to hold the rest of your life together.

I know this road. I am walking it right now, caring for my Daddy through dementia and illness. And I wrote this checklist for you the same way I wish someone had written it for me — honestly, practically, and with a whole lot of grace built in. This is not a list of things you should already be doing perfectly. It is a simple starting point. Seven things. This week. Nothing more.

You do not have to solve forever today. You only have to stabilize the next seven days.

The porch light is on. Let's begin. To help you move from overwhelm to traction, this starter kit is organized as a focused, one-week plan. Each step is intentionally small, concrete, and designed to reduce decision fatigue. As you move through the pages, you will find space to write, practical lists you can copy, and gentle reminders to take one thing at a time. Feel free to print these pages, tuck them into a binder, and bring them to appointments. If you cannot complete every step this week, that is more than okay. Choose two or three and celebrate completing them — momentum in caregiving is built through tiny wins that compound.

Before we enter the checklist itself, take a slow breath. Imagine flipping on a porch light at dusk — a steady glow that says, "You can always find your way back here." That is what these pages are for: a place to return to when the day goes sideways, when a medication changes suddenly, when you forget who you called last, when you cannot remember the question that kept you up at 2 a.m. Let this be your home base.



Your 7-Step Caregiver Starter Checklist

Work through these at your own pace. Check each one off as you complete it. Even finishing two or three this week is progress worth celebrating. The steps are ordered to give you the quickest relief first, then keep you organized and supported as you move forward. Use the templates and blank lines exactly as written — they are meant to be filled with your real-life details.

Step 1 — Create Your Medication Master Sheet

If there is one single thing that will reduce your daily mental load immediately, it is this. Write down every medication your loved one takes on one sheet of paper. Keep it visible, current, and easy to hand to any clinician. This becomes your single source of truth when a nurse asks for a list, when a refill is due, or when a symptom appears and you need to check side effects.

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Keep a copy in your care binder, one on the refrigerator, and one in your caregiver travel bag. Update it every time anything changes. Consider adding the prescriber's name and pharmacy contact on the back. Snap a photo on your phone so you always have a digital copy. If a medication is discontinued, draw a single line through it, note the date, and keep the record for context at future visits.


ROUND
TABLET
Side 1:
Side 2:
Take This Medicine
On An Empty
Stomach
Take This Medicine
With A Full Glass
Of Water
Take In The
Morning.
SHAPED YELLOW
TABLET
Side 1:
Side 2:
May Cause
Dizziness. Do Not
Drive Or Perform
Other Potentially
Dangerous Tasks
Until You Know How
This Medicine
Affects You.
BLUE PINK
CAPSULE
Side 1:
Side 2:
May Cause Dizziness
Take Medication On
An Empty Stomach
1 Hour Before Or 2
3 Hours After A
Meal Unless
Otherwise Directed
By Your Doctor.
May Cause
Drowsiness
DATE 08/24/

Step 2 — Name Your Three Biggest Priorities This Week

Not this month. Not forever. Just this week. Caregiving becomes manageable when you stop trying to solve everything at once and focus only on what truly cannot wait. By limiting the field to three, you create clarity for yourself and anyone helping you. Post these on your refrigerator or next to your calendar and treat them as your north star for the next seven days.

This Week's Three Priorities

Priority 1:

_____

Priority 2:

_____

Priority 3:

_____

Everything else this week: NOT MY JOB RIGHT NOW. Give yourself permission to write that sentence in big letters. When new tasks pop up, capture them on a separate later list. Your energy is a finite resource — this is how you protect it. If an emergency arises, you can always re-prioritize, but do so consciously instead of reactively

Step 3 — Set Up Your Caregiver Command Center

You need one place where all caregiving information lives. Not scattered across sticky notes, text messages, and your memory. One place. This reduces repeated searching, prevents missed refills, and helps other helpers step in quickly.

This week, gather the basics:

- A three-ring binder with tabs (Medical Info, Medications, Doctor Contacts, Insurance, Appointments)
- A large wall calendar you can actually write on — for appointments, therapy visits, and refill dates
- A small notebook for writing doctor questions and appointment notes
- A plastic sleeve for insurance cards and important documents

If your loved one asks repeatedly about appointments, walk them to the calendar and show them. That simple act often calms the repetitive questioning better than any verbal reassurance. Add color-coding for types of visits, and place the calendar somewhere both of you pass multiple times a day.


SUN MON TUE WED THU
1 2 3 4
7 8 9 10 11
14 15 16 17 18
21 22 23 24 25
28 29 30 31



Step 4 — Pack Your Caregiver Travel Bag

Before your next appointment, prepare a bag that stays ready at all times. When you are caring for someone with dementia or serious illness, unexpected things happen. Being prepared is how you stay calm when they do. Keep the bag by the door or hanging on a hook you pass daily. Review it every Sunday evening so you start the week ready.

- Change of clothing (appropriate size)
- Pull-ups or protective undergarments if needed
- Bottled water and easy snacks
- Wet wipes and hand sanitizer
- Plastic bag for soiled clothing
- Your medication master sheet
- Notebook and pen for doctor notes
- Insurance card copy

Always leave earlier than you think you need to. Dementia slows routines in ways you cannot always predict. Extra time is a gift to both of you. Build a 20–30 minute buffer into departure times to account for misplaced items, bathroom needs, or mobility equipment adjustments. Consider adding a small comfort item to the bag — a favorite scarf, lotion with a familiar scent, or soft music on your phone — to ease anxiety in waiting rooms.

Step 5 — Write Down Three Questions for the Next Doctor Visit

Most caregivers walk into appointments and forget everything they meant to ask. The doctor speaks quickly. The appointment ends. You remember the question in the parking lot. Write your questions now, before the appointment, and bring them with you. Hand the list to the nurse at the start so the team knows what matters most today.

My Questions for the Next Appointment

Question 1: _____

Question 2: _____

Question 3: _____

Appointment Date: _____ Doctor: _____

Bring your medication master sheet and a recent vitals log if you have one. Use your notebook to capture exact instructions, medication changes, and follow-up dates. At the end of the visit, repeat back the plan in your own words to confirm understanding.





Step 6 — Identify One Person Who Can Help You This Week

Caregiving was never meant to be carried alone. This week, identify just one person who could take one thing off your plate. Not the whole load. One thing. Naming a specific person and a specific ask dramatically improves the chance that help actually happens. Remember, many people want to help but do not know how — your clarity serves you and them.

This might look like:

- A family member who could pick up a prescription
- A friend who could bring a meal or sit for an hour
- A neighbor who could run one errand
- A church member willing to make one phone call on your behalf
- A professional home health aide even for a few hours

My One Ask This Week

Person I will ask: _____

What I will ask them to do: _____

When I will ask: _____

Asking for help is not weakness. It is how caregivers stay standing long enough to keep caring. When the person agrees, add the commitment to your calendar and send a brief confirmation text with the date, time, address, and any special instructions. Gratitude goes a long way — a simple thank-you note or photo update can build a reliable support circle over time.

Step 7 — Choose One Small Thing Just for You

This one is not optional. It just feels like it is. Before this week is over, do one small thing that has nothing to do with caregiving. Something that reminds you that you are a person, not just a caregiver. Choose something brief and realistic so you can complete it even on a hard day.

Turn up an 80s song in the car and sing every single word

Dance in the kitchen while dinner is on the stove

Call the friend who makes you feel like yourself again

Sit outside for ten minutes with a cup of coffee and no phone

Pray. Breathe. Be still for five minutes.

Watch one episode of something that makes you laugh

My One Thing This Week

I will: _____

When: _____

You cannot pour from an empty cup. This is not selfish. This is survival. Protecting a sliver of time for yourself actually improves the care you provide, because it restores perspective, patience, and presence.

You Are Not Alone on This Road

If this checklist helped you feel even a little more grounded, there is so much more waiting for you inside the full guide. *When Caregiving Changes Everything* is the book I wrote from inside the trenches... while coordinating home health services, sitting in waiting rooms, holding my Daddy's bruised hand from all the IV lines, and finding ways to keep going on the days when I genuinely did not know how I would.

Inside the full guide you will find:

- 13 full story-driven chapters covering every aspect of caregiving life
- Workbook reflection pages after every single chapter
- The complete Caregiver Command Center system
- Doctor appointment planners and tracking sheets
- Guidance on navigating home health, PT, OT, and insurance
- The emotional truth about burnout, grief, guilt, and surviving the hard days
- Plus its companion keepsake journal, *While I Still Can: A Caregiver's Journal for the Stories Worth Saving*, a place to capture your loved one's stories before time changes what can be shared.

Ready for the full guide?

When Caregiving Changes Everything and *While I Still Can* are coming this November as the **Porch Light Caregiver Collection**, at SerenityandSweetTea.com. Since you're on the Porch Light Post list, you'll be among the first to know when it's ready.

As you close this checklist, leave it somewhere visible. Let its presence remind you that you have a plan, that small steps count, and that your courage today is enough. When the week turns, start again at Step 1 or pick a different step to reinforce. Over time, these practices become rhythms, the kind that steady your home and heart.

The porch light is always on. You are not walking this road alone.

— Meredith Glynn

