Caring for an aging family member or friend can be a great experience, but it can also come with a lot of worries, hard work, and stress. Make the process go as smoothly as possible by taking care of potential issues before they happen.

**Optimizing Nutrition and Safety**

**Plan ahead**
- Investigate services in your area so you know what is available. Assist with the application or enrollment process, as needed.

**Reduce risks**
- Label chemicals and medications clearly, or lock up if needed.
- Watch for food safety issues. Is there expired food in the fridge? Can your parent reheat food or safely prepare raw meat?
- Remove or disable cooking equipment that poses safety risks.
- Consider a medical-alert bracelet.

**Monitor nutrition and hydration**
- Watch for weight loss and dehydration.
- Make a grocery list with your parent, and help with shopping.
- Keep an eye on their refrigerator. If food is piling up and going bad, they could be forgetting to eat, or avoiding food preparation.
- See a Registered Dietitian (RD), especially if your loved one has a health condition like heart disease or diabetes. Some older adults may benefit from careful diet management, while others may benefit from a more liberal approach. An RD can help determine the best plan for your loved one.

**Make sure you take care of yourself**
It is important to accept that you cannot do everything, and that your physical and mental health is a priority too! Adult caregivers often have their own lives, families, and even health problems of their own. Giving yourself a break will make you a much happier, healthier, and less resentful caregiver, all of which will benefit your aging parent.

Look to family and friends for help, even if just for a few hours. There are also many services in the community that can help, such as adult day care, companion services, home health care, meal delivery services, or respite stays in a nursing facility.