

Caring for Aging Loved Ones

*Presented by
LIFEWATCH
Employee Assistance Program*

Statistics

- 69% of caregivers are women- mostly married, working mothers
- 70% of care recipients are women
- 58% of care recipients are 65 years and older
- Nearly half million caregivers move to care for someone with long term illness
- Half of the care giving relationships that involve a move concern an adult child taking care of an ailing parent

Steps to Take

- Expect and accept that your parents will grow old
- Start talking to your parents about what they want
- Understand the critical role of legal and financial planning
- Talk with siblings about how to divide up responsibility
- Get yourself prepared for this

Things to Remember

- Your parents want to maintain their independence
- They want and need to maintain their dignity and respect
- Don't try to impose your way of life or values on them
- Research your options-homecare, home modifications, day programs
- Become familiar with new devices or technologies that may help a parent

The Family Meeting

- Invite all family members affected
- Create an agenda
- Write everything down
- List all concerns and prioritize according to urgency
- Assign specific tasks to family members
- Make a list of support groups

Dealing with Family Conflict

- **Avoiders** retreat at the first hint of trouble because they just don't want to face it.
- **Exploders** are provoked at the first hint of confrontation, basic issues cannot be resolved because they blow up
- **Victors** believe they must win. They can not tolerate that someone might know more than they do.
- **Extinguishers** deny that a conflict exists.

Who is a Caregiver

- The term caregiver refers to anyone who provides assistance to someone else who needs it to maintain an optimal level of independence.
- Families provide the vast majority of care
- Caregivers may or may not live with the person they are caring for.
- Caregiver maybe a family member, friend, neighbor, relative or a trained professional.

Long-distance Care Giving

- All usual care giving worries are magnified when a caregiver is far away.
- Can you tolerate travel and phone time?
- What is available in the area?
- Is there a relative close by that can provide some support?
- Are you skilled enough to get the real answer on the phone?
- Are you emotionally prepared to trust someone with your parent?

Overcoming Fear: The only control we have is over ourselves. You are in control of your life. It is your choice how you choose to live it.

- It is important to be aware of your feelings
- Feelings can be dealt with through action
- Feeling are neither positive nor negative

Role of Caregiver

- Transportation
- Shopping
- Household chores
- Medications
- Bathing
- Dressing
- Use positive words
- Less time for themselves

Steps to Honor

- Recognize their skills & successes, compliment them for accomplishments past and present
- Reminisce with them, have them tell their precious memories
- Record your elder's stories for grandchildren by video or scrapbook
- Reinvent memories, send notes on special days
- Encourage them to continue with hobbies if possible
- Renew energy with exercise if possible

How Do I Know If My Parent(s) Needs Help?

Activities of Daily Living

- Getting in and out of bed
- Bathing
- Dressing
- Feeding
- Problems with stairs

Instrumental Activities

- Using the phone
- Shopping
- Preparing meals
- Housekeeping
- Doing laundry
- Managing medications, finances

Good Eating Habits are Key Ingredients for Healthy Aging

Things to look for

- Weight change
 - Loss of appetite
 - Constipation
 - Chewing and swallowing problems
 - Ill-fitting dentures
- 75% of adults over 80 experience significant loss of smell and taste
 - Make sure doctor is checking if weight is appropriate

Driving?

- Impaired driving ability
- Medication that causes a decline in perception and mobility
- Poor vision
- Hearing problems
- Slow reflexes
- Memory problems
- Disorientation

Medical Paperwork Organizational Tips

- Store it in a binder so you can take it to the doctors
- Allergies
- Insurance numbers
- Instructions (power of attorney for health care and living will)
- Label sections with different doctors
- Medication
- Lab Tests
- Medical History
- Special Devices(hearing aid, pacemaker, etc.)
- Calendar to mark past and upcoming visits.

Tips from Physicians

- Write questions down so you won't forget them
- Be clear what you want to say to the doctor. Try not to ramble
- If you have a lot to discuss make a consultation appointment
- Educate yourself about your loved one's illness
- Recognize that not all your questions will have answers
- Appreciate what the doctor is doing to help, and say thank you from time to time

Organizational Tips for Other Information

- Contacts (names and numbers of family members, neighbors, lawyer, accountant etc.)
- Financial (name of company contact)
- Account numbers, safe deposit box and key
- Recurring bills, account numbers and payment information
- Insurance contact and policy number
- Legal (will, power of attorney)

Personal Records File

- Full legal name
- Social Security number
- Legal residence
- Date of birth
- Names and addresses of spouse and children or location of death certificates
- Location of will or trust
- Location of birth certificate, marriage, divorce, and citizenship
- List of education, military records
- Religious affiliation
- Request preference or prearrangements for burial

Financial Records

- Sources of income and assets (pension funds, interest income, etc)
- Social Security and Medicare information
- Investments income
- Insurance Information (life, and property) with policy numbers
- Bank accounts
- Location of safe deposit box
- Copy of most recent income tax return
- Mortgages and debts
- Credit cards
- Property tax
- Location of personal items and family treasures

Housing Options

- Having a parent move in with you: This can be a difficult choice or an easy choice
- Assisted Living: rent = rooms, meals, laundry, housekeeping and regular contact with staff
- Retirement Communities: independent living but with healthcare services and a nursing facility on the premises
- Nursing Homes: 24 hour supervision, registered nurses under the direction of a physician

General Home Modifications

- Place light switches close to room entrance
- Place a night light in the path to the bathroom
- Set light on timer, install motion exterior lights
- Remove loose rugs, buy a clock and phone with big numbers
- Rearrange furniture to make pathways
- Install handrails and grab bars in stairways and bathrooms
- Install anti-scald devices on faucets and shower heads
- Install a bed rail, shower or tub chair, lower shelves
- Replace doorknobs with lever handles

Types of Home Care Service

- Professional Nursing: occupational therapy, speech therapy, nutritional counseling, and nursing care
- Medical care: home chemo, dialysis, tube feeding
- Personal care services: assistance with activities of daily living and personal hygiene
- Support services: companionship services, transportation, volunteer visiting, meal programs

Time Management

- Try not to mix business with care giving
- Organize
- Prioritize
- Pace yourself
- Be realistic
- Delegate responsibilities
- Take a break
- Form a discussion group
- Talk to appropriate people at work

Relieve Stress

- Meet with other caregivers
- Support groups
- Visit with family
- Encourage & accept help from others
- Take advantage of services
- Accept that you might get angry
- Focus on relatives' good points
- Speak your mind calmly
- Don't expect perfection
- Take time to pat yourself on the back

6 Sources of Caregiver Stress

1. Changing Roles
2. Competing Demands
3. Increased Isolation
4. Unrealistic Expectations
5. Emotional Strain
6. Finances

Don't Burn out

- Ask for help when you need it
- Have respect for your loved one
- Plan your schedule
- Anticipate health issues
- Exercise
- Delegate household chores
- Listen well and learn to read between the lines
- Enjoy hobbies, family, social events
- Don't entertain "what ifs." Say, "I'm doing the best I can."

Taking Care of You

- Exercise
- Rest and relaxation are a right, not a privilege
- Maintain balanced diet
- Get enough sleep
- Practice deep breathing
- Have fun
- Support groups

Caregiver Survival Tips

- Plan ahead
- Learn about available resources
- Take one day at a time
- Develop contingency plans
- Accept help
- Make your health a priority
- Get enough rest and eat properly
- Make time for leisure
- Be good to yourself
- Share your feelings with others

Resources

- Office of Aging
- Community calendar in newspaper
- Dept. Elderly Affairs
- Veterans Administration
- American Red Cross
- Meals on Wheels
- Associations related to illness

Listen to your body
When you're tired, take a break and rest

Thank You
LifeWatch

Employee Assistance Program

www.lifewatch-eap.com

1-800-333-6228

TT/TTY 1-800-745-5555