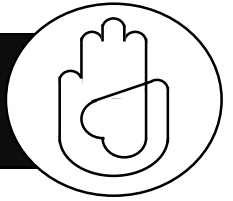


# ELDERCARE UPDATE



*Partnership for Eldercare: Partnering with your employer to help you with the needs of your aging loved ones.*

SPRING 2006

## CAREGIVING & YOUR SIBLINGS

*...Your mother has been diagnosed with dementia and it is clear that she can no longer live alone. You feel that an assisted living facility is the best care option, but your brother disagrees. Every conversation you have with him seems to lead to confrontation and hurt feelings...*

Providing care for an aging or ill parent can bring out the best and the worst in sibling relationships. Ideally, the experience of caregiving is a time for siblings to come together and provide mutual support to one another. However, the pressure of caring for aging parents can also lead to strained connections and painful conflict.

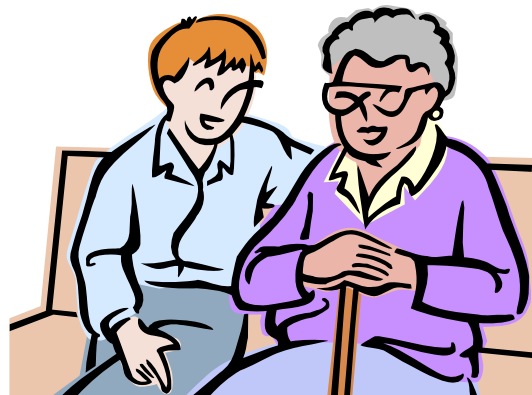
One major source of sibling friction is the legacy of family dynamics. Invariably, the demands of caregiving bring out old patterns and unresolved tensions. Past wounds are reopened and childhood rivalries re-emerge. It is not unusual for adult children to find themselves replaying their historical roles in the family, recreating old dynamics of competition and resentment as they vie for mom's attention and affection.

Another conflict can arise when one sibling is in denial over a parent's condition. Adult children who seem unable to accept the reality of a parent's illness and refuse involvement may be protecting themselves from facing a parent's eventual death and their own loss. More active siblings may react with bitterness and anger.

Most often though, discord surfaces from the unequal division of caregiving duties.

Generally, one sibling takes on the primary role of caring for a loved one. This may be because he or she lives closest to a parent, is perceived as having less work or fewer family obligations, or is considered the "favorite" child.

Regardless of the reasons, this situation can leave the overburdened caregiver feeling frustrated and resentful. It may leave the other siblings feeling uninformed and left out.



Resolving these conflicts can be challenging; *not* confronting these conflicts can make matters worse. Ultimately, strained family relationships can impede a family's capacity to provide the greatest quality of care to a parent.

### **How can families come together in caregiving? Here are some suggestions:**

- Express your feelings honestly and directly. Let your siblings know their help is both wanted and needed.
- Keep family members informed regarding a parent's condition. Be realistic in your expectations.
- Allow siblings to help in ways they are able and divide tasks according to individual abilities, current life

pressures and personal freedoms. Assistance with errands, finances, legal work or other indirect care may be the best option for some family members.

- Express appreciation to your family for help they are able to provide.
- Accept siblings for who they are and expect differences of opinion.
- Try to respect other's perceptions and find opportunities to compromise.
- If communication is particularly contentious, arrange a family meeting that includes an outside facilitator, such as your parent's physician, a geriatric care manager, a religious leader or friend. A trusted outside party can ensure that everyone's voice is heard. **Partnership for Eldercare** can provide suggestions and referrals to professionals.
- If siblings are unable to help with care, seek other assistance to provide respite for yourself--for example, adult day centers and in-home care. Call **Partnership for Eldercare** to locate help in your relative's community.
- Try to forgive family members who continue to refuse to get involved in a loved one's care. The only thing we have control over in a situation is our own reaction. Attempt to work through your negative emotions to take care of yourself and move forward. Support Groups for caregivers can be very helpful. Again, **Partnership for Eldercare** can help you find a support group that meets your needs.

Whether your sibling situation is filled with harmony or rivalry, please remember that help is just a phone call away. Contact an eldercare counselor at **1.800.94.ELDER** (outside NYC) or **212.442.3113** for a confidential consultation.

**Partnership for Eldercare** can help you and your siblings with the advice, information and support you need as you face the challenges and opportunities of caring for a parent or older relative.

## Partnership for Eldercare

**A resource and referral service provided to employees of your company...**

*Our experienced counselors can help you with:*

Home Care  
Assisted Living Facilities  
Senior Housing  
Nursing Homes  
Advance Directives  
Elder Law Referrals  
Long Distance Caregiving  
Medicaid  
Medicare  
Medigap Insurance  
Alzheimer's Disease  
Meals on Wheels  
Transportation Services  
Hospice  
Mental Health Services  
Home Modification Resources  
Long Term Care Insurance  
Adult Day Care  
Caregiver Stress  
Emergency Response Systems  
And More!!



**Please call us for a confidential telephone consultation.**

**☎ 1.800.94.ELDER**

**212.442.3113** [in NYC]

Or visit us on the web at:  
[www.partnershipforeldercare.org](http://www.partnershipforeldercare.org)