



Guidelines for Coping

How to Aid Your Aging Parents



Respect Your Needs

Be honest with your parents about your time and energy limits. Be upfront about the impact on your personal time and needs. Discuss the current state of affairs and a future plan in a casual manner.

Approach the subject of your parents' needs in simple terms. They understand the scope of their care needs and talking about the process can help defuse the tension. Once you open the lines of communication, you can begin to map a strategy that will work for everyone.

Talking Points

Some examples of talking points are below.

- The lack of quality time together with your parent.
- Note the physical demands of personal care and how it impacts you.
- Define what you can and can't do.
- Discuss your daily routine so they understand how their care needs may affect you.
- Draw parallels to a time in your parents' lives when they felt overwhelmed and had no help.
- Reaffirm your goal to get the best possible care for your parent.

Help Your Parents Retain Control

Respect your parents' need to make their own decisions and remain in control of their lives. Limits are often placed on their autonomy due to sickness, lack of financial resources and the quality of family relationships. Let them participate in the decision-making process, if possible.

The Family Plan

Reassure your parents. Let them know you are supporting them and they can depend on you to help solve problems.

Take Stock

As health and living problems arise, assess your parents' problems and needs. A professional geriatric team, including physicians, nurses and social workers, can perform the assessment. A lawyer and financial adviser may also be helpful.

Educate Yourself

You and your parents (if able), need to become educated in areas relevant to their changing situation.

- Legal matters, including wills and property ownership.
- Financial arrangements.
- Healthcare resources and support services.
- Housing and recreation sources.
- Current knowledge of the aging process.
- Consider a free in-home consultation with a Visiting Angels caregiver to aid in the decision making process.



Share the Work

Don't try to do everything yourself. Share the emotional and physical responsibilities among family, friends, professionals and private pay assistance.

Think Creatively

Brainstorm with family and friends about ways to help older family members maintain identity, continue interests on some level and create as many decision-making opportunities as possible.

Make Small Changes

Opt for the smallest change possible at each step. Don't be overwhelmed by the complete care that may be necessary in five years, when partial help may be all that is currently needed.

Take Some Risks

Be willing to take some risks if your parent is capable of realistically recognizing them and chooses to take them. At the very least, be open to a compromised solution.

Seek Advice

Obtain professional counseling if the situation or relationship with an elderly parent becomes overwhelming.

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937 Haverford Road, Suite 200
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

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