

Caregiving: Relationship Challenges and Rewards

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Leader Resources:

Caregiving: Relationship Challenges and Rewards
(Handout #)

Member Resources:

Caregiving: Relationship Challenges and Rewards
(Leader Resource #)

Roll Call:

Have you personally been a caregiver?
(The person needing care may not be homebound.)

Have you known someone in your family who has been a caregiver?

Have you assisted or helped someone with caregiving?
(Maybe you relieved someone for a weekend or visited an ill grandmother.)

Activity #1

Health Needs: Adult children must determine their older parents' general health status, capability of living independently, and whether they are receiving adequate health care. In most cases elders have been physically and sexually active and want to continue with their normal lives as much as possible. It is essential to make plans together to ensure they have opportunities to live life to their fullest potential, enjoying both physical exercise and privacy for an intimate life. Find out the answer to questions such as:

Do they have regular check ups for basic things such as blood sugar level and heart health?

Do they take medications in the appropriate amounts and at correct times?

Are they taking care of their physical and mental health?

Are they physically, mentally, and emotionally capable of living alone?

What are their end-of-life wishes?

QUESTIONS:

1. How can I talk to my parents about their general health, health care, and end of life wishes?
 - a. Consider the real situation
 - b. Consider your perspective, needs and wants
 - c. Consider the elder's perspective, needs and wants
2. What specific issues should I ask about?
3. When should I talk with them?

Activity #2

Financial Needs: Adult children must determine whether their older parents can manage their finances and have enough money for adequate housing, health care, food, and other necessities. Many retirees plan and save for the future, have pension and retirement plans, and investments from their working years. Others don't plan, save, or have the capability to do so. Whatever the situation for your parents, check to make sure they have adequate resources for their essential needs.

Define the issue. Discuss the issue. Decide a possible approach.

Do they have adequate money to pay bills? Are they paying bills and taking care of paperwork in a timely manner?

What type of health insurance benefits do they have? Do they have pension or retirement benefits with their employment?

Do they have any investments or savings? Are they capable of filling out any necessary forms for assistance?

Have they done any estate planning?

Do they have a will or trust, living will or durable power of attorney?

What are their funeral wishes?



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QUESTIONS:

1. How can I talk to my parents about their bills and financial status?
2. What specific issues should I ask about?
3. When should I talk with them?

Activity #3.

Housing Needs

Adult children must determine whether their older parents have a safe and adequate housing situation.

Define the issue. Discuss the issue. Decide a possible approach.

What are their wishes for housing?

Is their home a safe place for elders?

What are their housing needs?

Can older parents live alone or do they need some assistance?

What are their parent's wishes?

If making changes, will there be adequate privacy?

What about adequate assistance?

What is in the best interest of the parent given their current health status and capability for self-care?

QUESTIONS:

1. How can I talk to my parents about their housing wishes and needs?
2. What specific issues should I ask about?
3. When should I talk with them?

Activity #3

Dietary Needs

Adult children must determine whether their older parents have safe and adequate food to eat, and are eating at appropriate times in appropriate amounts.

Define the issue. Discuss the issue. Decide a possible approach.

Are they eating properly (nutritious foods at meals and snacks)?

Are they eating enough (or too much)?

Is it possible for them to participate in senior citizen meals or, if homebound, meals on wheels?

QUESTIONS:

1. How can I talk to my parents about their dietary needs and food habits?
2. What specific issues should I ask about?
3. When should I talk with them?

Scenarios for Discussion

To avoid conflict and frustration, use a caring and considerate response to the following scenarios. When responding, think about how you would feel if you were the older person.

The following scenario is an example of what you might discuss and the approach you may take. There are many options.

1. (Financial) "Mom, you're getting very forgetful and haven't paid your bills. It's about time you give me your checkbook."

or

2. "Mom, I'm concerned about your bills and the amount of paperwork you have on the desk. I'd be glad to help you. May I go over them with you? Maybe eventually I can handle your bills and you won't need to worry about it anymore."

The latter statement is more likely to meet with compliance. Why? It is more caring and respectful. It is also less threatening to the elder because it is less demanding. Elders do not want to give up control of their lives.

Practice using effective communication skills with the following statements. In pairs or small groups, listen to the other person, try to understand what was said, state what you expect, and avoid blaming statements. When appropriate, use the "I" message to state what you feel or expect.

For each scenario: Define the issue. Discuss the issue. Decide a possible approach.

1. (Relationship) Barbara was never particularly close to her father as she was growing up. He worked long hours and was quite cranky when he would come home. Though she managed through her childhood and feels fairly comfortable as an adult, she now finds herself in the position of being the only one who can help her father with his needs as he is growing older. Although she hasn't thought about it for a lot of years, really, she now finds herself feeling some resentment about her early relationship with her father.
2. (Dietary) Dad, you aren't fixing yourself anything decent to eat anymore. You never did like to cook. This package of hamburger has been in the refrigerator too long and smells. You're going to make yourself sick. Then what will we do?
3. (Personal Care) You've been wearing this old outfit every time I've been here. Why do you do that? You've got a ton of nice clothes in your closet. Why don't you wear them instead of this old thing?
- 4a. (Health) Mom, that's just ridiculous. You know that never happened. It was just a dream you had. I'm worried Mom; can't you tell dreams from reality anymore?

- 4b. (Health) Ed's dad lives alone. He has Parkinsons and has many days when he does not feel well. He has bouts with weakness, tiredness, and some pain. His medication has had an effect on his kidneys and he worries about having to go on dialysis. Ed doesn't know if that is the direction this would take or not. Ed worries that his dad may fall sometime and break a bone. He worries that on the days his dad is feeling weak he won't eat properly. He wonders how he would get his dad to dialysis every day if that needs to be done. What can you suggest for Ed and his dad? How would you communicate to your dad if you were Ed?
- 5a. (Housing) Cheryl's mother has become quite frail and they have agreed together that it is time for her to move from her home to a place where she can get help with her various needs. There are some senior apartments where she would no longer need to do any yard work, and there would be other people her own age to visit with in the other apartments. There is assisted living where she could have her own room, her own furniture, and meals, cleaning and some health care would be provided. There is a nursing home where full time health care is available, as well as meals and cleaning. There she would have her own room but be limited to how much she could bring with her. How can Cheryl and her mother decide which is best for her needs?

Resources

AARP www.aarp.org is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people age 50 and over, dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as they age.

State Unit on Aging

**Toll-free: (800) 942-7830
(402) 471-4617**

P.O. Box 95044

Lincoln, NE 68509-5044

www.hhs.state.ne.us/

www.hhs.state.ne.us/ags/aaa.htm#aown

Nebraska Mental Health Consumer Help Line

Toll-free: (800) 836-7660

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Toll-free: (800) 799-SAFE (7233); (800) 787-3224 (TTY)

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition
(NDVSAC)

<http://www.ndvsac.org>

Nebraska Area Agencies on Aging

www.hhs.state.ne.us/ags/aaa.htm

Aging Office of Western Nebraska:

(308) 635-0851 or (800) 682-5140

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging:

(402) 223-1352 or (800) 659-3978

Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging:

(402) 444-6444, (402) 721-7770 or (888) 554-2711

Lincoln Area Agency on Aging:

(402) 441-7022 or (800) 247-0938

Midland Area Agency on Aging:

(402) 463-4565 or (800) 955-9714

Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging:

(402) 370-3454 or (800) 672-8268

South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging:

(308) 234-1851 or (800) 658-4320

West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging:

(308) 535-8195 or (800) 662-3902

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Evaluation Form

1. Are you a caregiver for an elderly or disabled person?

- _____ Yes, I am currently a caregiver
- _____ I have been a caregiver in the past
- _____ I expect to be a caregiver in the future
- _____ I have helped some with caregiving but not had major responsibility
- _____ I have not been involved with caregiving

2. This information was effective in helping me to :

On a scale of 1 to 5

1=not at all effective 2=somewhat effective 3=average effectiveness 4=effective 5=very effective

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| • understand the changes and stressors that occur in the aging process | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • recognize the various roles caregivers may hold in assisting with elder's needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • strengthen basic communication skills with common issues affecting elders
(e.g.health, finances, housing) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. The parts of the lesson that I found most helpful were:

4. The changes I expect to make as a result of the lesson are:

5. Other information about caregiving that would be helpful to me is:

Pease return this form to:

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