

Better care without guilt

When you are providing care for a parent, the more help you can receive, the better. Involving others will provide a broader base of support and relieve you of some of the stresses related to caregiving. In the end, more help means less chance of burnout and increased ability to stay involved over time.

Of course, it is important to recognize that you must reassess your situation periodically to determine if care at home is still suitable for both you and your parent. If at any time you decide you can no longer provide appropriate hands-on care for your loved one, you should put aside any feelings of guilt or blame and seek outside alternatives.

The fact is, today's senior care options offer better health services, greater comfort, more social, recreational and emotional support than virtually any active family can provide. A growing number of these providers are also embracing the nurturing approach to senior care described in this pamphlet. Under the banner of "culture change," these enlightened organizations are transforming traditional institutions and practices into life-affirming, satisfying, elder-directed communities. Assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, in particular, are at the forefront of this nationwide movement to transform the entire culture of aging in America.



Choices for senior care

Here is a brief overview of some of the senior care options available to you, with a brief description of typical services that each one provides.

Chore Services: Volunteers, who will shop for groceries, help with house cleaning, run errands, etc.

Home Visitors: Services include meal preparation and delivery, reading and companionship.

Adult Day Care: Professionally supervised daytime activities, including meals, recreation, socialization and medication management.

Home Health Care: Nurses, therapists, aides and dietitians provide in-home health and personal care services.

Rehabilitation/Sub-Acute Care Facilities: Physical, occupational and speech therapy, pain management and other specialized post-hospital or post-illness services.

Memory Care and Enrichment: Programs and facilities designed specifically for people with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of memory impairment or dementia. Specially trained staff provides comprehensive healthcare support, activities and supervision. Dedicated nursing facility units, wings or freestanding centers offer safe and secure settings for care.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities: Designed to meet the changing needs of residents, from independent living to minimal assistance, up to 24-hour skilled nursing care.

Assisted Living Residences: Senior care facilities offering help with activities of daily living, including bathing, dressing, medication management and nutrition.

Skilled Nursing Facilities: All-encompassing care, including round-the-clock nursing, rehabilitation and full support services.

Helpful resources

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

1-888-687-2277

www.aarp.org

American Association of Homes for the Aging

1-202-783-2242

www.aahsa.org

Alzheimer's Association

1-800-272-3900

www.alz.org

Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116

www.eldercare.gov

Family Caregiver Alliance

1-800-445-8106

www.caregiver.org

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A Nurturing Approach to Parenting Your Parent

- Signs that your parent needs help
- Care with dignity
- Senior care options



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Is anyone ever prepared to be a parent?

The answer is probably “no.” Regardless of the books we read or the classes we attend, for most of us, becoming a parent is part of a process. We learn as we go, growing right along with our children.

We are perhaps even less prepared for a second parenting role – that of being a parent to our own parents. After all, these are the people who brought us into the world, taught, guided and protected us. They have always been Mom and Dad. We have always been the children. Yet, at some point, those roles will almost certainly be reversed.

How to know when a parent needs help

As they age, even the healthiest, most robust seniors will eventually need some form of assistance. The need for caregiving may be signaled by a sudden crisis or by any number of minor mishaps or warning signs...

- Your mother injured her hip and now she’s having trouble getting around.
- Your father is skipping meals and is too tired to cook for himself.
- You’re getting frequent calls to help with chores around the house, shopping trips and transportation to appointments.
- You’ve noticed that your parent’s house isn’t very clean and there are unwashed dishes in the sink.
- Your mother is having difficulties with personal hygiene, dressing or managing her medication.

These and other telltale signs do not necessarily mean a parent can’t continue to live on his or her own, but it does mean that you need to consider some type of assistance.

Difficult decisions

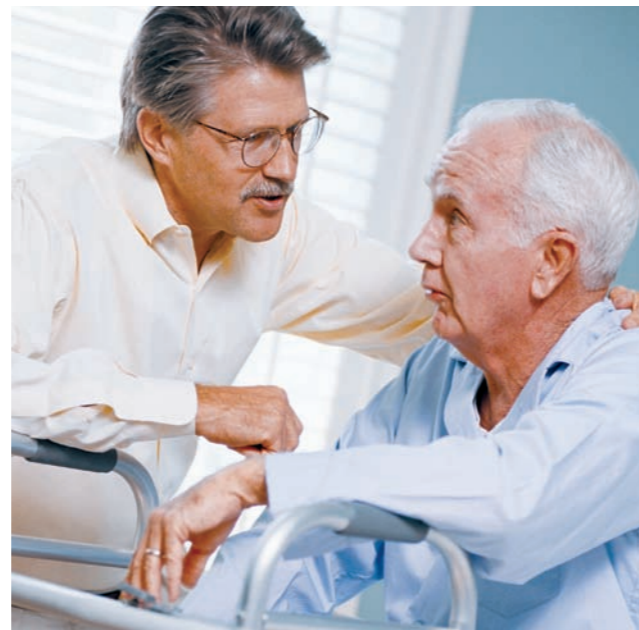
Where will your parent receive the care he or she needs? Who will be the caregiver? What particular challenges does your parent’s condition pose?

While each caregiving situation is unique, one thing is certain: the time to begin planning is now, before a crisis occurs.

Family caregiving

One answer many adult children choose is to provide care for a parent themselves. In fact, as the aging population grows, the ranks of family caregivers are swelling. Today, estimates are that 5 million Americans spend some time caring for a parent, a figure that is projected to double within the next 20 years.

Caring for a parent at home may mean providing only minimal help or it may require round-the-clock assistance. The demands on the family, and the primary caregiver in particular, can be enormous. Without proper knowledge, understanding and support, caregiving can affect your lifestyle, relationships and work performance, as well as your physical and emotional health.



Those caring for someone with dementia face especially difficult challenges that will only increase as the disease progresses. As a caregiver, you and your supporting family must be prepared to deal with major adjustments brought on by new duties and responsibilities. You also must respect your own need for renewal. Time away from day-to-day caregiving is essential to your emotional and physical well-being. When the time comes that you can no longer provide the kind of care your loved one needs, do not hesitate to seek outside help.

A nurturing approach to senior care

Too often, in our well-meaning efforts to assist and protect our elders, we instead create a situation where they feel isolated and dispirited, with few choices and little control of their own lives. Armed with this awareness, adult children must strive to create an environment that is satisfying and meaningful to the parent, where independence is encouraged and individuality is affirmed. Here are a few basic ingredients in this nurturing approach to caring for a loved one at home.

- Involve your parents in decisions about their own care. Unless they are severely incapacitated, they should always retain decision making power and play a central part in all discussions.
- Talk to them about the importance of working together as partners. Your parents will likely be concerned about being a burden to you and losing control of their lives. Your reassurance will help put their minds at ease.
- Talk through family issues. Agree on ground rules and establish your own limits so that your parent won’t have unrealistic expectations.
- Hold family meetings to keep everyone – your spouse, children and siblings – constructively involved in your parents’ lives.



- Be a good listener and respect your parents’ opinions.
- Privacy is important. Your parent should have his or her own room.
- Consider physical adjustments and adaptations to your home that will help maximize your parent’s independence and sense of security.
- Keep parents engaged and stimulated. Adult day care and community-based programs provide a wide range of social, recreational, health and other support services during virtually any part of the day.
- Show affection. More than you might imagine, affection brings meaning and purpose to the mundane affairs of daily living.