



September 2011

“If I Only Knew that Before” - The Family Caregiver Lament

Every time I teach a class for family or professional caregivers, I hear “I wish I knew that 5 years ago” or “Why didn’t I take a class like this before?”

Having the right information at the right time is not a science; it is an art and a little “magic”. How many of us were really ready for college, marriage or parenthood? Did you take a class to prepare you for those life transitions? The answer is mostly “no” – but once you entered that life stage you might have sought out expertise or information to make it better or to resolve issues.

The advent of longer living brings families to another transition and creates a need for the “Family Caregiver.” Many of us answer the call to be the caregiver out of love, duty or just being the only one!

There are three steps to being a successful family caregiver:

Step 1: Admit you have a problem
Understand the underlying issues or specific illness of your family member. Take classes, read books and sign up for newsletter related to your family member’s struggles (such as the Alzheimer’s Association, Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, etc).

Step 2: Enlist family and experienced professionals to help you understand, change and evaluate your options
One cannot enter into the family caregiver roll without support from family, friends and professional caregivers. Organize a family meeting and share the care – be specific on the assistance needed and don’t try to do it all yourself. Always have a plan “B” in place for when others disappoint you. This might include “respite” coverage with an assisted living center or Professional Geriatric Care Manager for home care.

Step 3: Make necessary changes in your life in order to keep a balance and still be a caregiver Once you have



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learned some techniques to make care giving easier like how to provide hands-on care or new ways of communicating (especially to someone with a dementia), you need to practice and get feedback. The best feedback is to see a more content care recipient and to see your own stress reduced. Since this takes time and a cheering team, you might want to join a caregiver support group – to support your permission for self-care and help you with the “rough edges” that might be a struggle. Trying on new ways of living is like wearing new shoes – a little stiff at first. If one way doesn’t work, try on a new approach.

The Family Circus II: Walking the Tightrope of Elder Care” is coming soon – October 15, 2011 from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. This is a day of information for families coordinated by Eldercare Services’ professional staff and is a community service of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Pleasant Hill, California. If you or anyone in your circle of contacts is dealing with aging or elder care issues, this is one of those events that you should not miss. Dr. Michael Nelson, Neurologist, will speak about Alzheimer’s Care; Elder Law attorney, Michael Hanson, will talk about planning for the cost of long term care; and Cazeaux Nordstrum, MFT, will talk about how to keep a balance while care partnering. I will talk about the Power of Love/Care and Forgiveness.

The day is filled with break out sessions on: Challenging Behaviors, Moving or

Staying at Home, Hospice Services, Resistance to Care, Innovations and New Technologies in Care.

Many community providers of service to elders and their families will have displays and a free lunch will be provided. There is no charge but you will have the opportunity to make a donation for lunch – all proceeds will go to the Alzheimer’s Association and Meals on Wheels.

Some of those who attended our first Family Circus in 2010 have reported that the information they received has been a big help. One cared for her dear friend during the final days of her life and thanked us for the valuable information. Another woman, struggling with an early diagnosed dementia husband and his resistance, used the skills she gained at the Family Circus and told me that he now is willing to move to the Mid-West where she will have family support for this long journey.

Education is empowering, life giving and life renewing. Caregiving can be a time of great love and connection and doesn’t need to be a time of 24/7 stress. Much of the support and information you need will be found in this day. You can register for the workshop and get more information by contacting Lindsay Freeman in our office at 925-937-2018 or LindsayF@EldercareAnswers.com.

Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care, and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808 or email us at Info@EldercareAnswers.com.

Eldercare Services works with Seniors and their families in Walnut Creek, Alameda County, San Francisco and the Tri-Valley, CA. Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more information.

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

What You Need to Know About Dementia But Were Afraid to Ask

3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days ahead

For more information regarding classes and support groups, visit us at www.EldercareAnswers.com or call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at info@EldercareAnswers.com

Support Groups

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

Caring for An Aging Family Member

2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM

605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131

Cost for Support Groups: None

Support Group Registration: Not required



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Advocacy, Care, and Education

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