

Eldercare Answers

October 2012

“When My Time Comes, I’m Ready.” Preserving Dignity during End of Life

As I ride the tide with my mother’s life coming closer to an end, I most definitely understand how some of the decisions that families are facing don’t come with easy solutions. That is mostly because the life of a person you have loved for all your life is in your hands – or that is what it feels like. I have to remind myself that I am not God and I can only advocate for my mother’s comfort and quality of life based on her values, not mine.

This process is full of emotional “pot-holes” and, even though I am a Family Therapist and an experienced Geriatric Care Manager with the knowledge of what I need to do, the decisions and necessary planning tear at my heart strings.

When I purchased her cremation policy on the same day that I signed my mother up for Hospice, it felt as if I was giving up the fight, so I cried on my way home. In retrospect, I was facing the reality of the “Circle of Life” by being practical, by taking care of business before a crisis and by securing her “comfort” through Hospice. The four trips to the ER in one month motivated me to action.

My mother has said many times and I have heard from clients over the years, “I’ve had a good life and, when it’s my time to go, I’m ready.” I remember my grandmother saying, “When the train comes, my bags are packed!” Maybe it is easy for 90 year olds to say but the sons and daughters often don’t want them on that train and sometimes we just get in the way by making this last journey longer and more painful than it needs to be.

During the last hospitalization, I had to advocate to have her admitted and not



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on “observation” status so that we could get some skilled nursing days paid for by Medicare. I had to stop unnecessary testing and major changes in medications that have complicated every hospital admission. This is where my professional experience benefited my mother’s end of life course; I feel good about these interventions.

Hospice has been wonderful and I truly appreciate the dedication and commitment to provide my mother (and my clients) with comfort during this final phase of life. They were helpful in assisting with her move from a skilled nursing center to the small home where she now resides, saving me much stress. When my mother or clients do get into a medical crisis, however small or large, the hospice professionals react and provide the oversight and the care needed.

The hard times are when my mother thinks I’m there to bring her “home” from the small residential care home. During one visit, she hugged the caregiver and gave her a kiss thanking her for everything she had done and turned to me and said, “Are we going home now?” I said, “No, you need to stay here” and she replied, “What about my home?” I said, “Your grandson is taking care of your home” and she said, “No, the other home.” I responded with

the name of the Assisted Living Community where she had been staying and she said, “Yes!” Then, when I said we could not pay for both, she said she understood, but looked sad, so I said, “You could go back if you get better” and she replied, “Am I sick?” Of course I was quick to say, “You can go home when you don’t need the oxygen anymore.” I could feel myself on the inside wanting to cry. However, I stayed with her needs and knew that my heart needed to wait.

Right now, Mom is in a situation where her dignity is respected. She isn’t in a room with a number or a diagnosis; she is in a home that she says is “good!” She chats with the other residents and introduces me to them on every visit and never forgets to say, “Thanks for coming!”

The challenges are great and filled with emotional pot-holes. The tears will come again but the joy of seeing her being respected and getting what she needs is a gift. I can only hope I can be as gracious as she when I get to this part of my journey and that I can have an advocate to see that I am respected and cared for in the best way possible during those final months and days. And I hope that my family will be willing to let me go when my train arrives.

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

Support Team Eldercare at the Walk to End Alzheimer's

Eldercare Services is participating in the Walk to End Alzheimer's-East Bay on Saturday, October 6, 2012. Show your support for Alzheimer's research and Team Eldercare by donating here:
<http://tinyurl.com/8sy77kz>.

Eldercare Services works with Seniors and their families in Walnut Creek, Alameda County, San Francisco, Marin County and the Tri-Valley, CA.

Visit us on the web at www.EldercareAnswers.com for more information.

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

What You Wanted 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

Cost for Classes: None

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 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

More Info: (925) 937-2018 or (415) 469-8300



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