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May 2015



Newsletter

About Our Founder

Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and became a Certified Care Manager in 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989, which now employs over 200 caring people. Eldercare Services has been providing Bay Area families with care management, home care services (caregiving), advocacy, counseling, support groups and education for 26 years.

Monthly

My Marriage or My Mom?

It pains me to see individuals putting their most intimate relationship on the line for parent care needs – and not because I think the parent is either not in need or not a beloved person. Many times I have been a sad witness to seeing the “Over-Caring, Good Meaning, Loving” individuals lose a long-term marriage because they were spending all of their time and emotional energy on the family caregiving call.

That call has come to over 44 million of us, and as Baby Boomers age, it will only increase. Just last week, I talked to an adult child who is in her 40’s trying to balance her marriage and her career to care for a mom in the early stages of dementia. The good news for her is that she is reaching out for resources and professional guidance that will help her retain the “precious” balance needed in the journey of aging parent care.

If we think about those over the age of 85 and that about one half of them have an organic dementia and the other half of them need help with at least two of the activities of daily living, we can see where the pull is. Those over 85 are the fastest growing segment – so as the years progress, more of us will need help and support. We tend to think that only family can provide care or maybe we want family to provide it. In some cultures, this is even truer in that bringing in community services or hired help is considered a taboo, causing those adult children

Affirmation

"I keep a healthy balance between responsibilities and relationships."

-Linda Fodrini-Johnson

MA, MFT, CMC

Founder &
Executive Director



even more stress by thinking that they are breaking a cultural tradition or religious obligation.

Marriage has its normal cycle of challenges (new baby, new job, moving, health care changes and more), but with more obligations of extended family or elder care comes the added stress to relationships. Imagine trying to balance a home with teenagers, a career and a mom in the early stage of Alzheimer's. The mother who is calling you at work, many times a day asking insignificant questions or wanting you to come over because she is scared, may get all your primary attention and emotional energy – draining you from quality time with your spouse.

Answering Mom's calls seems doable, but can easily become just the distraction that can shelter you for a time from working on a marriage that is already strained by other interpersonal challenges.

What should couples do when the burden of parent care hits them? How does one keep a balance or give the energy and emotional liability to those who need it without troubling any of the individuals, including the primary caregiver? All individuals who find themselves as caregivers need to take stock of what gives their life meaning and purpose, ensuring to give priority to those other individuals (spouse or children) and/or life pleasures (art, music, travel, etc.). This needs to be done even if they have to reduce the time they give, in order to have the honor of giving care to a parent that they love, and/or have a legal obligation to oversee.

A couple, whose parents were all on their second marriages, came to see me a few years ago, mostly for advice on how to take care of not four aging parents, but eight, all of whom had care needs. I helped them prioritize who needed what type of care first and how to get the help they needed. While I didn't address their marriage in that initial consultation, they called and came back to look at their disappointment with one another. Their story had a good conclusion and once they found one another again, they had the time to give to one another and begin to live the retirement they envisioned.

Here are 6 tips to help you gain balance in caregiving:

1. Don't wait for the problem to end! Learn about resources and get professional support for your marriage and yourself – a Professional Care Manager can help.
2. Balance self-care – Do a renewing activity for yourself each day so that you have the emotional and physical energy to support yourself, your marriage and your mom!
3. Learn to do "mindfulness" activities as well as breathing exercises. This will reduce stress and help you to be in the moment for you and your loved ones.
4. Forgive yourself. You are not perfect so if you lose your patience, forgive yourself before going to bed.

5. Attend a Support Group if you find yourself in a recurring situation – Get the encouragement, comfort, advice you need from others in the same boat.
6. Find activities you can do with your spouse; walking; biking; gardening; dinner out; a week-end retreat. Look for meaningful opportunities to spend time with your spouse.

Support groups and/or coaching or counseling from a Professional Care Manager are great ways to get the permission you need to say “No” to someone who is needy and to say “Yes” to your marriage, health and career. Love is often what is needed not what is wanted. You just can’t be everything to everyone else without losing yourself.

Seek out support systems that can help you design an affordable plan that meets your values. This planning could come from Counseling Services or a Professional Care Manager (www.aginglifecare.org).

Events

Dementia Education Series

Join Linda Fodrini-Johnson as she discusses what you need to know, what you need to plan, and what you and your family can do when faced with the challenges of dementia.

Dementia: Understanding Behaviors & Finding Solutions

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2015

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

- Tools on how to have conversations about needs when denial is present
- Giving you permission to "stretch the truth" for dignity, safety and self-esteem
- Understanding the different types of dementia

Caregiver Survival 101: Caring for Someone with a Dementia - Reducing Your Stress

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2015

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Riding the roller coaster of dementia care? If the emotional ups, downs, and loop-di-loops are making your head spin, our Caregiver Survival Series is for you!

Topics include:

- The major challenges of dementia care
- Responses and reactions to reduce your stress
- Self-care activities, mini-support group, and resources for coaching and support

Monthly Support Group

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

Caring for an Aging Family Member

2nd THURSDAY of EVERY MONTH
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Addressing the fears of Alzheimer's disease &
other issues associated with aging.

No Fee and No Registration Required.



Location:
ELDERCARE SERVICES
1808 Tice Valley Blvd.
Walnut Creek, CA 94595

To register for classes,
call: **866.760.1808**
or email:
info@eldercareanswers.com



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Providing Bay Area families with Care Management, Home Care Services,
Advocacy, Counseling, Support Groups and Education since 1989.

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