



August 2011

# Forgiveness vs. Conflict in Family Caregiving

Why is it that some of us hold on to grudges or old hurts? What is it that keeps us connected to the negatives of our past? When someone states that you need to leave those things behind you, you need to move on and forgive the other person with whom you've become enraged. You might think, "How can I? Do you know what he did to me (or mom or dad)?"

Stanford professor and researcher, Dr. Fred Luskin, has written a powerful book, "Forgive for Good – A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness".

Many of us associate forgiveness with a religious connotation. But Dr. Luskin is looking at the impact of this process in a more generic or non-sectarian manner and how not forgiving can negatively impact our health. It is not only "God" who forgives – it is each of us. We have the power to let go and find peace with others and ourselves.

Luskin's book tells us that when we hold on to old hurts, we are not free to move on and that will keep us stuck both physically and psychologically.

As a Therapist, Geriatric Care Manager and a mother, I have said many times, "You give away your power to the other when you stay angry and can't move on". Some individuals have been stuck in the caldron of old hurts for decades.

When siblings have to share the responsibilities of parent care with one another, old hurts can surface and come back to cause pain to everyone. Your brother truly may want to provide hands-on care for Dad; but you see him trying to be the "favorite" child as he was when you were kids 60 years ago. You remember your brother never getting in trouble and always getting his needs met at the expense of the other three children. If that is your emotional



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memory, it is very hard for you to trust that your brother doesn't have some other motive in providing care.

Your older sister wants to hire in-home care for mom and use mom's assets while your younger sister, who has not been successful in her life, wants you to preserve the assets for her inheritance/retirement. Your younger sister has been given lots of things that you and your oldest sister never had: your parents paid for all of her education, gave her a down payment on a house that she lost and the story goes on. You boil just thinking about her being greedy and it annoys you how much your mother brags about how caring your sister is.

This anger will get in the way of the parent receiving the care he or she needs and could extend into the process of settling an estate long after her death. It could cost the family thousands of dollars in legal fees and take years to remedy, while exacting a toll on the health of all involved.

There are at least three ways for you to move beyond anger to forgiveness:

- 1) Read Dr. Luskin's book and incorporate his 9 steps to forgiveness in order to give yourself peace and wellness.
- 2) Work with a mediator or a Geriatric Care Manager who is experienced in working with families in conflict.
- 3) E-Mail Eldercare Services and get a copy of the FIRR method of working

through conflict with anyone. This document is a simple four step process that could keep you from building a storehouse of anger or grudges.

Anger internalized can become depression or a stress related illness, such as a cardiac condition or a cancer. In a recent article on WebMD, about the effect of anger on your health, Jerry Kiffer, a heart-brain researcher at the Cleveland Clinic states, "You get high cortisol and high adrenaline levels and that is cardiotoxic...it causes wear and tear on the heart and may speed up the process of atherosclerosis." Scientists believe that anger can cause serious heart issues.

It can be even harder to forgive yourself for some transgression of deeds done or actions not taken. When trying to forgive the self, it is best to work with a professional counselor, in a group process or with a religious leader. Self-forgiveness is the most challenging and you need a mirror – clear of judgment - to free yourself from that "stuck" place.

Don't stay stuck in "anger" no matter what the transgression. This does not mean forgetting – it's "letting go" that is necessary for healthy living. Be at peace – live fully!

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*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](mailto: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](http://www.EldercareAnswers.com) or call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at [info@EldercareAnswers.com](mailto: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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