



April 2012

Extreme Caregiver Stress and Hopelessness

We all can do something about stories like these:

In my local newspaper there was the extremely sad story about a mother who killed her 23 year old autistic son and then herself in a haze of despair, frustration, grief and hopelessness.

A few years back I was aware of another situation with an Alzheimer's caregiver spouse who took both of their lives. Then there is the more recent incident of an older couple with a myriad of medical issues taking their lives together.

The story stirred up lots of activism – but will it last? Should we not be a society that cares for the frail, the handicapped and the least able among us? Where are our values if we continue to allow family members to go to the depths of despair that ends lives?

Would it have been different if the state governments or local non-profits funded more programs for those with autism and other conditions that require both 24/7 supervision and heroic amounts of patience from family caregivers?

What can we do as individuals, voters, leaders, legislators and members of organizations that provide community service?

We could invest more dollars in the State of California's Regional Center care management and support program. As it stands now, families are lucky to get one visit by a social worker a year –



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and social workers' case loads are so large that they don't have long tenure with this service – they burn out and leave. Families with funds can hire a professional care manager and many do (because we serve many of those families) – but what about ones that don't have resources or even know there are support systems available?

Become political – send a letter to your state legislators and your national representatives as well.

Until there are medical reversals of diseases like Alzheimer's and Autism, we must support family caregivers and the individuals who need care by providing day programs, respite weekends, in-home respite and professionals trained to work with family caregiver stress.

The other step each of us could do is to get out our check books (it doesn't matter if it is for \$10 or \$10,000) and write a check to organizations like: Family Caregiver Alliance www.caregiver.org, Families First, or your local affiliate of The ARC (www.arc.org) or The National Alliance on Mentally Illness (www.nami.org).

We could also talk to leaders in

synagogues, churches or mosques that direct community outreach and see if they could start a program with trained volunteers that could give these families a few hours off once a week – Become creative!

If we have relationships with anyone in a caregiving role, we can encourage them to attend support groups and to share the care with other family members, volunteers or paid caregivers. Balance between caring and self-care allows us to continue to care. Self-care is critical and necessary, especially when you love someone so much that you have no time to renew yourself.

So, when you hear yourself say “someone should do something about this” – you are the “someone”! Just write the letter or the check and send it with positive energy in hopes that no one will ever have to take the life of someone they love because the burden of care is too great.

When you hear family caregivers say they can't cope – get them to a support group. Have them give us a call and we will try our best to find a group that works for them and their needs. We are all in this “life” together!

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, Marin County and the Tri-Valley, CA.

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

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

Dementia: 101

For Families Experiencing the Challenge

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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