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Newsletter

THIS MONTH

January 2019

Spousal Caregiving: A loving gift or a burden of duties?

The wedding vows spoken by many couples have a phrase that says, "In sickness and in health." If spoken in a religious setting it means to many that they promise, not only to the partner but also to God, that they will care for the other no matter what the realities of their lives bring.

Loving is a gift we give ourselves; it is an investment in a fulfilling life, to go through the challenges and joys with someone who always has your back. However, when one partner has a progressive illness, the burden after years and years of caregiving gets very heavy. The well spouse often has some age-related changes and challenges of his or her own. In my practice, these hardworking, dedicated spouses often don't see to their own medical issues or social activities when focused on their loved ones.

For many years, I have had the honor and privilege of working with numerous well spouses who were having difficulty taking care of themselves. Some of the adult children caring for aging parents who I have worked with were also trying to balance caregiving with the needs of husbands or wives, children or a career.

Guilt often arises when issues of self-care are discussed. When caregivers do take care of themselves and experience being in the moment they come back to their duties with a new perspective. They also see the importance of finding ways every day to enrich their own lives, without focusing 24/7 on their ill partner. At some point in the caregiving journey, one person will find that 24/7 care begins to take a toll on both mental and physical health.

I have seen many well spouses die or have a serious health crisis before the one he or she was caring for died. Often this is due to not heeding the warning signs or listening to the advice given to them by professionals or individuals in support groups.

About our Founder



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management (now

called aging life care) since 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 28 years.

MONTHLY AFFIRMATION

"I care for my spirit and soul in healthy life-giving ways."

CONTINUED ➔

Individuals come to a point where they have to make some hard decisions on how to share the care. “Do I put my family member in a care facility?” “Do I hire help?” “Do I share the care with other family members?” As professional Care Managers and Family Therapists, we often have family meetings to assist with these decisions – they will be different for each couple – but they are a sign of being realistic in regard to the care needed by each person in the relationship. No matter the end decision, it is about love because love is doing what is needed, not necessarily what is wanted.

We all want to be healthy and enjoy our partners until the end of life. The reality is none of us are superheroes and we can’t provide care when we are stressed day in and day out. Most of us can be family caregivers for our partners if we commit to a balanced life. That means sharing the care with paid caregivers or family, finding daycare options or even placement, and using the new free time for self-renewal. It means enjoying the activities that give your life meaning and purpose – it could even mean a day of volunteering, going to a spa, or just going to the library and reading without listening for someone calling your name.

Another important concept is to learn mindfulness techniques, such as meditating, focusing on breathing, praying, and listening to guided meditations. There are some wonderful websites and apps to help with relaxation: Calm.com and Headspace.com. Yoga is another form of mindfulness. These exercises are best done daily to assist with stress management.

If you are struggling with self-care, a few sessions with a Professional Care Manager could get you back on the health track and allow you to be a caregiver who is well in mind and spirit. The journey brings sadness because your partner can’t participate due to his or her illness, but your self-care allows both of you to have a better you!

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.



Upcoming Events

Dementia: The Roadmap From Diagnosis to Family Care

Jan 16th 5:30pm – 7:00pm

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.

- ▶ What is dementia? Where is it diagnosed?
- ▶ Understanding the progression
- ▶ What does a family need to do to prepare for the journey?
- ▶ Protecting dignity and reducing stress in all family members

Advanced registration required. No fee.

Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging. <https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-3/>

Writing Your Last Chapter: Do You Have the Tools, Players, and Details Communicated?

Jan 18th 2:00pm – 3:30pm

Presented by: Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC and Joan Grimes, Attorney at Law

- ▶ So you thought you had all the documents you needed. But what about post-death plans?
- ▶ Your options and desires might not be followed if not articulated well.
- ▶ Get tips for the conversations and the legal tools from professionals working with families for over 30 years!
- ▶ How granular do you need to get with your planning?

Advanced registration required. No fee.
<https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-2/>

Dementia: Understanding Behaviors and Finding Solutions

Jan 30th 5:30pm – 7:00pm

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Understanding why the right diagnosis is important

Advanced registration required. No fee.

Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging. <https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-0/>

Location of Events:

Eldercare Services, 1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595