

CARING FOR A PARENT

These days, the emphasis is to help people maintain their independence in their own home for as long as they can. When the ability of a parent to take care of themselves diminishes, family members are suddenly faced with the task of coordinating and providing hands-on care and support.

Regardless of who provides care, resentment can arise between siblings when the primary caregiver does not feel they receive adequate support from other family members. Many of these caregivers can feel angry, abandoned and unappreciated by their family.

Why is the responsibility sometimes left to one person?

- A parent may only want one particular child to care for them.
- Family members who contribute financially may feel they have given enough.
- You may not be assertive enough in demanding help from other members of the family.
- Family members who live far away are often unable to help with daily caregiving tasks.
- Some family members refuse to cooperate or ignore the situation altogether.
- Siblings who work outside the home may feel that the family member who does not is the only one with enough free time to assume the burden.
- Some people may hold the old-fashioned belief that caregiving is a female's responsibility.
- Family members who have young children may feel that those without children have more time to provide care.
- Most medical teams request one person be appointed as the family spokesperson.

What Can you do to cope?

- Communicate your parent's progress to your family frequently. Explain to them and your parent the things that you may be experiencing difficulty with, and why. Try to work on a plan that allows managing of your parent's care to be more than one person's responsibility.
- If you feel you are unable to arrange these discussions because you are too upset or exhausted, speak with a third party who may be able to help you arrange this.

An adult child who recognized the denial, stubbornness, complaining and other such behaviors are just defensive reactions to the changes and losses their parent is experiencing, and not the care that they are receiving, will be better able to understand and cope with the situation. Learn not to react to the behavior but the reason behind them. Only then can their needs be met.

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