Caring Together!

Practical Tips for Sharing Caregiver Responsibilities with Siblings and Other Relatives

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Families and Caregiving

1. Return to family of origin
   • But I’m a grown up now
   • Why I moved 3000 miles away

2. Role in family then and now
   • Role inversion

3. How did I get this job?

4. Navigating with others with whom you may or may not have been in contact with
Family Roles/Family History

1. Birth order
2. Sex roles
3. How do decisions get made?
4. Who fixes things when they are broken?
5. “I’m the responsible one so it always falls on me to do.”
6. Power
7. MONEY

- Families try for homeostasis
- Communication differs depending on which family members are present during a conversation
- Responsibility vs. obligation vs. love
  - Dealing with ambivalence
- Parental reluctance
  - Dealing with accepting help
  - Don’t want to be a burden
Common Sibling Conflicts

1. Re-emergence of Sibling Rivalry
2. Unequal Division of Tasks
3. Providing Financial Assistance Rather Than Time and Effort
4. Whose Time Matters Most?
5. Concern over Inheritance
6. Different Perceptions of Parent’s Needs
Working Together as a Family

- Define your needs
- Letting others know what you want/need
- How to ask
- How to deal with rejection
- How to deal with lack of follow through
- Who can you change?
- It’s not fair
Communication Tools

- How you say it may be more important than what you say
- Set yourself and your family members up for success
- If at first you don’t succeed, try another method
- You can’t change anyone no matter how “right” you do it
Family Meeting

- Who should be present?
  - Care receiver there? Not there?
  - How to get the players together
    - Who are the players?
    - Time limit to meeting

- Use of a facilitator

- Where? When?

- What
  - Agenda
  - Create safety
  - Put it all in writing
  - Share information
  - Plan for continued communication

- Share Information
  - Diagnosis
  - Problems—be specific
  - Concerns
    - Caregiving
    - Financial
    - Emotional Burden
    - Chores
    - Physical Care
    - Social Support
◆ Prioritize

◆ Brainstorm
  • Resources
  • Availability of family/others
  • Respite

◆ Evaluate Options
  • Benefits and limitations
  • Financial restrictions
  • Personal preference

◆ Create a Plan
  • Who does what
  • Step by step outline for implementation

◆ Divide Responsibility
  • Use each one’s talents
  • Make written agreements

◆ Next Meeting Time
  • Plan for check in
  • What worked/what didn’t
  • New Issues
Effective Communication Tool One
USING “I” STATEMENTS

❖ Takes responsibility for asking for what we want and need
❖ Considers others’ feelings and needs; is not blaming
❖ I feel _____ when _____ happens.

Special Concerns of Families with Dementia

❖ Making agreements with patient doesn’t work
❖ Being rational, reasonable and logical doesn’t work
❖ Family members often question the diagnosis
❖ When parent has dementia, no place to put the resentment, so easier to resent sibling.
❖ Family dealing with grief and loss of
  • Future
  • Person who was
  • Free time
  • In for the long haul

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Taking Care of YOU

- Deal with grief and loss of loved one and/or family members
- Relaxation, stress reduction
- Getting breaks even if no one helps you
- You have a right to all of your feelings
- Asking for help
- Keeping a sense of humor
Tips for Encouraging Sibling Participation

Let siblings know their help is wanted and needed.
We often think that it is obvious that we need help and what that help might be. Remember that our family members are not mind readers, they may not respond to hints! Let them know what kind of help you need. Waiting for offers will just lead to resentment. Practice saying “yes” to offers of help, even when the offer isn’t exactly what you had in mind.

Keep siblings in the loop.
Even though your siblings might not call as often as you would like, keep them informed of doctor appointments and changes in your loved one’s condition. This will make future conversations easier and reduce frustration when they don’t understand your concerns. Emailing to everyone at once or having one sibling call another sibling might reduce the pressure on you to “do it all.” Writing a letter or sending a round robin letter can also keep everyone informed. Keep a copy so you have something to refer back to. Having a family meeting or regular check in times can also help in having everyone on the same page.

Listen to siblings’ opinions concerning care decisions and be willing to compromise.
Even though you are the primary caregiver, you and your siblings are in this together. Look for common ground, so as to not set up a win/lose situation. Even if it isn’t done your way, ask yourself how bad is it, really, that it is done a different way. Try to stay open to their input.

Ask siblings to complete specific tasks.
Sometimes we put out vague requests for help. It may be hard for others to know what we really want. Making your request for help concrete will allow you to get a definite response, e.g. Can you come this Sunday and watch mom while I go to church?” rather than “I sure would like to go to church some Sunday.” Often a “to do” list gives others a chance to choose something, thus increasing the likelihood of them following through.

Allow siblings to help in ways they are able. Have realistic expectations.
Not everyone is comfortable doing hands on care. Look at what they CAN do, not want they CAN’T do. Build on their strengths, skills and preferences. Also take into consideration their own health limitations, other family commitments, travel distance and time, and their emotions vis a vis caregiving and their relationship to the care receiver. Some are more willing to help in short bursts, others on a weekly schedule. Negotiate both their availability and your needs.

Accept siblings for who they are.
This is probably one of the hardest things to do. But we cannot change them and changing family dynamics takes a long time and a firm commitment. You can only change you and how you respond to situations. It is hard to let go of old grudges and unresolved issues from the past, but the more you can keep the issues in the here and now, the more successful you will be in getting cooperation. But you can take care of yourself along the way!

Reach out to the community
There are support groups, community agencies, religious organizations and volunteer support available. Use these to help you in your caregiving as well as asking for family support. Don’t forget friends, neighbors and extended family as possible helpers.
Caregiver Resource Centers and the Regions They Serve

Bay Area Caregiver Resource Center/
Family Caregiver Alliance
Statewide Resources Consultant
180 Montgomery Street, Suite 1100
San Francisco, California 94104
Phone: (415) 434-3388 or (800) 445-8106
Website: www.caregiver.org
E-mail: info@caregiver.org
Alameda • Contra Costa • Marin • San Francisco
San Mateo • Santa Clara Counties

Coast Caregiver Resource Center
1528 Chapala Street, Suite 302
Santa Barbara, California 93101
Phone: (805) 962-3600 or (800) 443-1236 (regional)
Website: www.coastcrc.org
E-mail: ccrc@silcom.com
San Luis Obispo • Santa Barbara • Ventura Counties

Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center
736 Chestnut Street, Suite F
Santa Cruz, California 95060
Phone: (831) 459-6639 or (800) 624-8304 (regional)
Website: www.hpcn.org/delmar
E-mail: hpc@hpcn.org
Monterey • San Benito • Santa Cruz Counties

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center
5723A Marconi Avenue
Carmichael, California 95608
Phone: (916) 971-0893 or (800) 635-0220 (regional)
Website: www.deloro.org
E-mail:crc@deloro.org
Alpine • Amador • Calaveras • Colusa • El Dorado
Nevada • Placer • Sacramento • San Joaquin
Sierra • Sutter • Yolo • Yuba Counties

Inland Caregiver Resource Center
1420 East Cooley Drive, Suite 100
Colton, California 92324
Phone: (909) 514-1404 or (800) 675-6694 (California)
Website: www.inlandcaregivers.com
E-mail: info@inlandcaregivers.org
Inyo • Mono • Riverside • San Bernardino Counties

Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center
3715 McClintock Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90089-0191
Phone: (213) 821-7777 or (800) 540-4442 (California)
Website: www.losangelescrc.org
E-mail: lacrc@usc.edu
Los Angeles County

Mountain Caregiver Resource Center
2491 Carmichael Drive, Suite 400
Chico, California 95928
Phone: (530) 898-5925 or (800) 822-0109 (regional)
Website: www.caregiverresources.org/MCRC_home
E-mail: smrossi@csuchico.edu
Butte • Glenn • Lassen • Modoc • Plumas • Shasta
Siskiyou • Tehama • Trinity Counties

Orange Caregiver Resource Center
251 East Imperial Highway, Suite 460
Fullerton, California 92835
Phone: (714) 578-8670 or (800) 543-8312 (regional)
Website: www.caregiveroc.org
E-mail: ocrc@stjoe.org
Orange County

Redwood Caregiver Resource Center
141 Stony Circle, Suite 200
Santa Rosa, California 95401
Phone: (707) 542-0282 or (800) 834-1636 (regional)
Website: www.redwoodcrc.org
E-mail: rcrc@redwoodcrc.org
Del Norte • Humboldt • Lake • Mendocino • Napa
Solano • Sonoma Counties

Southern Caregiver Resource Center
3675 Ruffin Road, Suite 230
San Diego, California 92123
Phone: (858) 268-4432 or (800) 827-1008 (California)
Website: www.ssrc.signonsandiego.com
E-mail: scrc@caregivercenter.org
San Diego • Imperial Counties

Valley Caregiver Resource Center
3845 North Clark Street, Suite 201
Fresno, California 93726
Phone: (559) 224-9154 or (800) 541-8614 (regional)
Website: www.valleycrc.org
E-mail: info@valleycrc.org
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