

Caregiving: Work With Your Siblings To Keep Your Life, Family, and Sanity Intact!

Family Caregiver Alliance

*Bay Area Caregiver Resource Center &
National Center on Caregiving*

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- **Palo Alto Medical Foundation:**
A multi-specialty healthcare provider with physicians and clinics throughout California.
- **California Department of Mental Health:**
Ensures through partnerships the availability and accessibility of effective, efficient, culturally competent mental health and family caregiver services statewide.

Presenter:

Francine Russo

Francine Russo is the author of *They're Your Parents, Too! How Siblings Can Survive Their Parents' Aging Without Driving Each Other Crazy*. She is a widely recognized journalist who covered the boomer beat for *Time* magazine for nearly a decade and authored the “Ask Francine” column.

She has also written for *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Family Circle*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Self*, *Glamour*, and *The Village Voice*. A mother of two and stepmother of three, she has a Ph.D. in English and lives in Manhattan. www.YourParentsToo.com



How Siblings Can Deal with Eldercare— and Each Other

- **Parent Care is rarely shared equally among adult children**
- **There is an epidemic of sibling tensions over caregiving and related issues:**
 - Caregiving -**
 - **Medical Decisions**
 - **End of Life Decisions**
 - **Power of Attorney over Finances and Health**
 - **Dementia**
 - **Mourning and Inheritance**

There is also Good News...

- **Opportunities for Deep Satisfaction**
- **Increased Closeness with Siblings**
- **Personal Growth and Understanding about Your Family**

Why Dealing with Siblings is so Hard Now:

- **This family caregiving passage is new in our time**
- **Siblings have no model or script for how to manage it**
- **Everyone in the family is struggling, and mutual compassion can help families work together even when family members disagree**

Other Reasons Why Dealing with Siblings is so Hard Now:

- **This is not just a period of meeting practical challenges: It is a major emotional passage for the whole family and for everyone in it.**
- **The Family is experiencing a new kind of transition.**
- **Adult children, their siblings and parents have to interact intimately and long-term over the parents' needs**

Other Reasons Why Dealing with Siblings is so Hard Now: (cont.)

- **Families must work together again after not having lived together for decades**
- **The old way the family operated doesn't work anymore**
- **Families need to adapt their old roles to these new times: this is hard for families**

Other Reasons Why Dealing with Siblings is so Hard Now:

- **Each person is going through a profound emotional passage, facing the parents' aging and death**
- **Our parents aging and need for care stirs up old needs from childhood**
- **Sibling rivalry can be re-awakened and affect how we react to each other**
- **Our fights with siblings may be about old history**

My own story:

Two sisters struggling with destructive old ways of communicating

- **What I learned as a person and a journalist**
- **Why I wrote *They're Your Parents, Too!***

Communicating Effectively is one of the Biggest Challenges for Siblings

- One example is the story of **Stan and Leslie** — too many assumptions and not enough communication
- What caregivers need to know about asking for what they need
- What siblings of caregivers need to know about what they can give

Traps for Caregivers and Siblings and How to Avoid Them

- **Trap One:** Waiting until there is a crisis before talking, and not including everyone
- **Trap Two:** Siblings thinking that caregiving involves only doing concrete tasks, and if a sister or brother is doing them, they're taken care of
- **Trap Three:** Caregivers not knowing what they really want from their siblings

Traps for Caregivers and Siblings and How to Avoid Them

- **Trap Four:** Falling into the fallacy of "I shouldn't have to ask"
- **Trap Five:** Getting Caught in the Anger-Guilt Gridlock
Making siblings feel guilty doesn't work well;
siblings defend themselves and attack or withdraw

Getting Out of the Anger Guilt Gridlock

Story of **Kathrin, Sharon and Evie:**

- **How caregiver Kathrin and her sisters got into the anger/guilt gridlock**
- **How Kathrin made a move to extricate herself and make peace with her sisters**

Learning More Effective Ways to Ask for Help

- **Avoid hints; ask directly**
- **Be specific**
- **Be realistic**

Get a professional from outside the family to help you communicate and mediate conflict

Epilogue:

- **Making Peace with my sister—and my own mistakes**

Summary

- **This family caregiving passage is new in our time**
- **Siblings have no model or script for how to manage it**
- **Everyone in the family is struggling, and mutual compassion can help families work together even when family members disagree**

Avoiding the traps Will Help You Have a More Successful Caregiving Experience With Your Siblings

Questions/Comments

- **Submit any questions** you have on the topic covered today.
- You will receive an email invitation shortly asking you to **provide your feedback** on this program. Please take a moment to share your thoughts.
- **Thank you** for joining FCA and Francine today for this Caregiver Education and Support Seminar.

For More Information On Caring For a Family Member, Partner or Friend

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