



Making The Decision To Get Help For A Loved One

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Making the decision that your aging parent or loved one needs help is one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make. More than likely you will be met with resistance and you may find yourself in what may appear to be a **NO WIN** situation. Who is going to provide the care? Whether it is family members or an outside service, you are making a wise decision.

So how do you recognize that your loved one needs help?

Here are some signs:

- Poor grooming - sloppy appearance, infrequent bathing...
- Basic tasks - difficulty eating, dressing, walking, cooking, managing medications...
- Isolation - not maintaining outside friendships or interests, no hobbies...
- Erratic Attitude - Paranoid, refuses to communicate, extremely argumentative, abusing alcohol or drugs...

- Dementia - consistent memory lapses, confusion, loss of reasoning skills, difficulty answering questions, gets lost walking or driving, inability to find the right word...
- Health - Black and blue marks (may be falling), bed wetting (urinary incontinence), dehydration (complaints of being thirsty), weight loss, problems swallowing...

If you find yourself in the position of caring for a loved one, it is important to know that caregivers should access the many resources available to them. Caregivers need information about caregiving and hands-on help. The idea that taking on the responsibility for an ailing or aging parent means that the caregiving adult child does everything by themselves, while simultaneously continuing to meet the demands of their own lives and families. This is often shown to be destructive to the caregiver as well as impractical, leading to feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and resentment.

In our busy world, caregiving is already a complicated task, but when multiple family members are involved the complexities can lead to confusion, frustration and miscommunication.

Who will take responsibility for what tasks? Often the majority of the work is delegated to the family member who has the most available time. Caregivers placed in this position harbor resentment

which leads to the demise of family relationships, the most important support system the loved one so desperately needs.

In this situation a compromise is usually the best course of action for the loved one and the entire family. The primary caregiver may feel unappreciated or victimized because other family members feel he or she is not providing the best care. While neither side may want to be seen as "giving in" it may be in the best interests of the loved one to compromise. Outside evaluations from physicians or case managers may also prove helpful in deciding on the best course of action. Many loved ones would prefer to remain at home if the cost of care is not prohibitive or if the care necessary does not exceed what can be provided. Many times a trained personal care provider can provide the majority of care when skilled nursing is not needed. Families should know that there are many options available for assistance. These include in-home care, day care, family counseling and other services.

The best course of action is to have a game plan. The family needs to sit down and assess their loved ones needs and evaluate if they have the skill sets within the family unit(s) to care for their loved one, or do they need to seek outside assistance. Decisions involving care for a loved one should not be hurried or rushed in to. The family should take their time and weigh all the options available to them.

Should the family choose to use outside assistance, remember you are asking someone to care for your loved one in the privacy of their home, you should be considering more than price for the care of your loved one. Take the time to research the various in-home care agencies.

Over the last 2 years Cypress HomeCare Solutions has trained over 500 families on how to care for a loved one using the American Red Cross Family Caregiving Program. For more information, visit the company web site at cypresshomecare.com or call (602) 264-8009.