



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Elder Care

The United States Department of Labor reports that over 40 million Americans provide elder care to a parent or loved one. In addition, 22% of these elder care providers also have children who they care for simultaneously. This is becoming increasingly common as elderly people are living longer and young adults are starting families later.

Navigating the demands of elder care, especially when also caring for your children, along with balancing a career is a hefty burden. Managing this can be more reasonable when you are armed with knowledge, resources, and a support system to lean on.

Careful and advanced planning will enable you to make the smoothest transition into the caretaker role. It is helpful to talk to your parents about the future, well before they become ill, incapacitated or a medical emergency arises. Discussions regarding medical care, finances, housing, and personal concerns can be difficult to have, but they are necessary.

Documentation:

When caring for an aging parent it's important to make sure that all legal and financial concerns are handled appropriately. Ensure that your parents have both a will and a living will in case life

sustaining medical care is needed. Speak with them about designating someone as their healthcare proxy. If a health crisis arises it is so important to be able to jump into action on your parent's behalf instead of being tied up with legalities. Also, find out if they have long term care insurance or enough savings to cover the costs of a Home Health Aide or a nursing home if the need for either should occur.

Medical Matters:

Become acquainted with your parent's physicians. It's important for your parent's doctor to see that their elderly patient has an advocate who is looking out for them. As people age it is common to visit multiple doctors for different conditions, but make sure that your parent has one good general practitioner who oversees all of their medical care. If your parent has a serious or chronic condition, it helps to arm yourself with knowledge about the illness, so you know what to expect and prepare for.

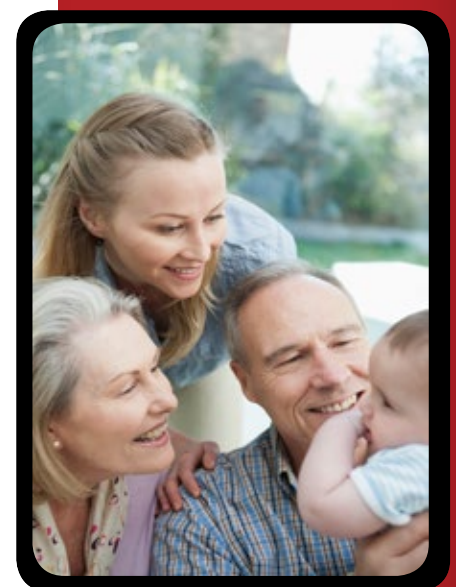
Handling Finances:

Ensure that your parent has designated a trusted person as durable power of attorney. This person has the ability to make financial decisions on their behalf should your parent become unable to do so or requires assistance. Durable power

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1.800.327.2255

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of attorney can handle matters for your parent such as paying bills, managing assets or selling their home. If your parent is still in control of their own finances, have them be extremely careful, as the elderly are a favorite target for con artists. Salespeople peddling themselves as “Financial Advisors” often approach older people with the intent to sell them fraudulent insurance packages or make terrible investments, which result in a loss of their savings.

Long Distance Care:

83% of all elder caretakers provide support from a distance. Since you are not able to supervise their everyday living situation, it is crucial to be organized. Have a list of important phone numbers, doctors, emergency services, home health aides, etc, on hand at all times so you can quickly act on your parents behalf whenever necessary. Similarly, make sure all people involved in your parent’s care have a number where they can reach you. Establish a local support network. Recruit any friends, family or neighbors that live close to your parent and ask them to keep their eyes open and check in from time to time so they can keep you abreast of daily living conditions and your parent will appreciate the company. It is critical to call your parent on a consistent basis; keeping in regular contact will enable you to provide much better care. If your parent is tech savvy, set them up with the internet and a web-cam. This makes keeping in touch simple and you will both feel more connected through video chat!

Try to visit as much as possible. While you are there take a mental inventory of your parent’s appearance, actions and the condition of the home. This will help you to make decisions from afar about issues your parent may not be telling you about. Also, take the time to visit with people who see your parent on a daily basis and ask about their normal daily condition. Finally, check out local services that cater to the elderly and any service that

your parent currently uses to ensure that they are safe and sanitary. Most of all enjoy the visit and focus on spending quality time with your aging parent.

Moving In:

If your parent(s) must move in with you, try to carve out some space in the house that they can call their own. Your house will inevitably feel a bit cramped so giving your parents their own space will allow them to maintain a level of privacy and dignity. It is important to understand that moving in with you may be extremely difficult for your parent, so be sure to treat them with the utmost respect. You may be caring for them but they are still an adult and should be treated as such. It is also important to foster and promote independence; this will help them retain their identity and feel less like a burden on you.

Nurturing Your Family & Yourself:

If you are in a relationship remind your partner that their help caring for your parents is appreciated and take some time each week just for the two of you to re-connect. If you have children be sure to still spend plenty of quality time with them without their grandparent present, so they do not feel like an afterthought or that they are being lost in the shuffle. Finally, nurture yourself! Find at least one solo activity that you enjoy and helps you relax – reading, a massage, working out, hiking – and fit it into your schedule. Providing elder care can be stressful and overwhelming, the key is finding a balance!

Remember that eni’s Personal Assistants are available to provide our members with elder care assistance and resources!

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