



Reigning Grace Counseling Center

Counseling Center Phone: (816) 694-1677

Online Training Program Phone (816) 673-6360

Real Life: Caring for Aging Parents

Julie Ganschow MA, Biblical Counseling,
IABC, ACBC Certified

I. The Biblical Mandate

A. The Bible commands we care.

1. Care for the widows and orphans – Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 27:19; Matthew 23:14; James 1:27
2. “Honor your father and mother” is the first commandment with a promise. Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2–3
3. Parental neglect lumps you in with those who have "denied the faith" and those who are "worse than an unbeliever". 1 Timothy 5:8
4. Love God, love others as you already love yourself. Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:27 –28
5. Honoring and loving and caring for our parents are all facets of obeying that command. 1 Timothy 5:1–8; James 2:14–17

II. Caregiving Statistics

A. Family Caregivers

1. More than 65 million people provide care for a chronically ill, disabled, or aged family member during any given year.
2. An average of 20 hours per week is spent providing care.
3. 13% of caregivers provide care 40 hours a week or more.
4. 36% of family caregivers care for a parent.
5. 7 out of 10 are caring for loved ones over 50 years old.

B. The Sandwich Generation

1. Defined as: adults who are parenting children while providing care for their parents.
2. More than 37% of female family caregivers have children or grandchildren under 18 years old living with them.
3. 1.4 million children care for an adult relative.
4. 72% are caring for a parent or grandparent; and 64% live in the same household as their care recipient.
5. Approximately 66% of family caregivers are women who are 49-years-old and caring for her widowed 69-year-old mother who does not live with her.

C. Caregiver to my Parents

1. Mom

- a. July 2006 – ARMD
 - b. November 2006 – August 2007- diagnostics for breathing, increasing back pain, COPD and emphysema diagnosis.
 - c. September - rapid decline physically and emotionally
 - d. October- hospitalized severe thrush, dehydration
 - e. April- July - 2008 COPD worsens back pain intensifies
 - f. August 2008 - complete bowel obstruction, pneumonia secondary to feces aspiration- near death.
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- g. October 2008- hospice begins, DNR in place
- h. December 2008 increased weakness, sleeping, decreased food and water intake.
Totally unable to care for personal needs
- i. January 13, 2009- she passes into eternal life
- 2. Dad-
 - a. 2011- notice lapses in cognition.
 - b. 2012 concern about him living in the house.
 - c. January 2013- Dad seemed to fit the picture of non-dementia, normal age- related memory loss.
 - d. March 2013- medical conditions revealed greater problems than we'd realized.
 - e. June 2013- move to senior apartment advanced confusion. Required help with ADL, difficulty finding words, memory problem was evident.
 - f. November 2013- first car accident
 - g. December 2013- second accident, loss of driver's license
 - h. January 2014- failed mini- memory test
 - i. May 2014- increased falls
 - j. June 2016 – concern about safety
 - k. August 2016- move to assisted living facility- duration of 6 weeks
 - l. September 2016- move to memory care unit.
 - m. Present- total decompensation
- III. Healthcare Provisions for the Elderly
 - A. Healthcare provisions are often adequate.
 - 1. Family caregivers provide an estimated to be \$375 billion in care a year for "free."
 - 2. Home health aide or CNA is usually provided after hospitalization for limited visits.
 - 3. Hiring private health aid is often cost prohibitive.
 - B. Family as Caregivers
 - 1. The children become amateur nurses or nurses' aides.
 - 2. 22% of family caregivers say they need help communicating with physicians.
 - 3. Become a researcher.
 - a. Educate yourself on their illness, medicines, prognosis.
 - b. Learn what you can do to make any aspect of their life better for them.
 - 4. Medications
 - a. Up to 70% of family caregivers manage medications for their loved ones.
 - b. Many family caregivers are fearful of dispensing medications, or giving the wrong medications.
 - 5. Personal Care
 - a. Someone should be sure their personal needs (bathing, dressing, teeth or denture care) are being tended to.

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- b. This often falls to the family caregiver because of cost or because the elderly person refuses to allow help.

IV. Financial Hardship of Caregiving

A. Career is impacted

1. Six in 10 family caregivers are employed.
2. 73% of family caregivers either work or have worked while providing care.
3. 66% have had to make costly adjustments to their work life.

B. Ancillary expenses

1. Most not covered by insurance.
2. 47% of working caregivers indicate an increase in caregiving expenses has caused them to use up ALL or MOST of their savings.
3. The average family caregiver for someone 50 years or older spent \$5,531 per year on out of pocket caregiving expenses (2007)

V. Physical Hardship of Caregiving

A. Takes a toll on caregiver's health.

1. 23% of family caregivers caring for loved ones for 5 years or more report their health is fair or poor.
2. Various consistent stressors bring exhaustion.
3. The stress of caregiving can take as much as 10 years off a family caregiver's life.
4. Caregiver stress is one reason the sick person goes into a nursing home.

B. Dealing with changes in behavior and personality while caregiving.

1. Depression (sorrow without hope)
2. Sadness
3. Hopelessness
4. Panic
5. Fear
6. Aggression
7. Irrationality
8. Anger
9. Wandering
10. Restlessness
11. Agitation
12. Hallucinations
13. Apathy

VI. Parent Advocate

A. Obligations of the role

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1. You are the eyes and ears of your parent at doctor visits.
 2. Communicate your parent's wishes to the staff, run intervention for them.
 3. Be sure you are on the HIPPA forms!
 4. Help them develop a Healthcare and Financial POA.
 5. Keep a notebook of information from doctor visits and phone calls.
 6. Make a medication list and review it with all medical personnel.
- B. Discuss and determine if it is the right time for Hospice Care.
1. Hospice
 - a. Manages the patient's pain and symptoms;
 - b. Assists the patient with the emotional and psychosocial and spiritual aspects of dying;
 - c. Provides needed drugs, medical supplies, and equipment;
 - d. Provides bereavement care and counseling to surviving family and friends.
 - e. Hospice is NOT euthanasia in the USA.

2. Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

Also known as no code or allow natural death, is a legal order written either in the hospital or on a legal form to withhold CPR or advanced cardiac life support in respect of the wishes of a patient in case their heart were to stop or they stop breathing.

VII. Emotional Hardships of Caregiving

- A. Caregiving brings many conflicting emotions.
1. Divided loyalties between family and my parents.
 2. Guilt
 3. Fear
 4. Sorrow
 5. Helplessness
 6. Horror
 7. Acceptance

VIII. Christ, Your Caregiver

- A. Run to Christ.
1. You can experience the sufficient grace of God in your weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
 2. You have a caregiver who will meet all your needs. Christ is your model for caregiving. Ephesians 5:1-2
 3. Jesus washed feet. John 13:12 – 17, Matthew 20:26-28
 4. Jesus served while exhausted, sad, and inconvenienced. Mark 6:12,13, 31,33; Matthew 14:13-14; 15:29.
 5. Jesus made certain to spend time with his heavenly father every day. You must do the same.
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6. Jesus relied on the power of the Holy Spirit to fill him with abilities to do the impossible. You must do the same.
7. Jesus just got away from the crowds to pray and rest. You must do the same.
8. Jesus begged his father to remove the cup of suffering. You may do the same. But always submit to God's plan.

Recommended Resources

Read the Psalms of Lament in the Bible

God's Healing for Life's Losses by Bob Kellemen

Sunsets: Reflections for Life's Final Journey by Deborah Howard

Second Forgetting by Dr. Benjamin Mast

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