



Recognition, communication are critical as families make decisions for elderly parents

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Whoever said “Growing old is not for sissies” knew what they were talking about. But, if you are taking care of an aging parent, you cannot be a sissy either. It is not easy to transition from a child relying on your parents to that point in your life where one or both of your parents have to rely on you.

As more and more of our parents live into their 80’s and 90’s, more and more of us will find ourselves in situations in which we become the caregiver.

Money Magazine reports that nearly 10 million baby boomers are not only rearing their children or supporting an adult college-age child, but at the same time are needing to be available for an aging parent.

It is no wonder this generation has been called, “The Sandwich Generation,” squeezed between the simultaneous demands of aging parents and their own children.

Ideally, you should have discussions with your parents long before they need assistance. For those boomers with siblings, the task can be even more daunting in getting everyone on board with a plan of action; especially when siblings live in different parts of the country.

“Long distance” eldercare then becomes even more stressful and complicated, especially when one sibling feels she is shouldering more of the burden than her brothers and sisters.

Another complication can arise when parents are not ready to acknowledge they need to share their financial information with their

children, including detail of their will, life insurance policies and bank accounts.

After all, our parents have been independent far longer than their children, and moving into that phase of life where one needs some outside assistance is not an easy to accept.

Throughout this process it is important that our aging parents clearly understand that their feelings are respected at all times.

It is vital that communication does not carry the theme “this is what we think is best for you so this is the way we need to do it.” Instead, focus on asking your parents what they are comfortable with.

But then that time will most likely come when children must make tough decisions. This is when tensions and stresses can increase.

Points of conflict may include:

- Considering whether mom and dad should sell their house;
- Deciding whether a parent should stop driving;
- Determining if the time has come for a parent needing to move into an assisted- living environment or into a nursing home. Frequently this comes to surface following a stroke or other major illness in which family members must rush to make a plan of action in preparation for hospital discharge.

With brothers and sisters as part of the family group, generally one sibling stands out as the “leader” in the process.

Regardless of good intentions, siblings sometimes can feel that the older brother or sister is taking over

the process and making unilateral decisions without their input.

This can cause resentment.

Communication can at times be more important among the siblings than with the parents so that siblings can work through some of their own issues.

In the Evansville area there are resources available to provide information and assistance. In the midst of all these necessary decisions and conversations, it is vital that you take care of your future too. It is important to seek out these resources to assist you and your family.

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