



Adult Children Facing the Reality of Aging Parents

The first jolt of recognition that my aging parents were possibly experiencing some struggles maintaining their independence came one summer when I was visiting with them for a couple weeks. As the daughter who was living long-distance, the changes in my father's health from eight months previously, may have been more evident to me than to the siblings living nearby. As my visit progressed, so too did the indicators that my father was being challenged cognitively.

Hindsight is always 20/20 but looking back, I recalled it had only been two months earlier in a phone conversation with my parents that they announced they had gone for a drive that day and ended up at the car dealers and had purchased a new used car. I already had reservations about my father still driving so this was not welcome news to me. I inquired as to what car they had purchased and details such as the color of the car. Neither one of them could answer with any real conviction but seemed comfortable with the fact that the mystery would be resolved in a few days when they would pick up the car. They would let me know then. I asked my father how the car drove. "The salesman asked me if I wanted to take it for a test drive but I told him that I knew how to drive so it wasn't necessary." I swallowed my urge to sound alarmed.

These scenes play out in many homes as adult children are faced with the reality of their aging parents no longer being able to manage their lives as before. Many times it is easier to look the other way and pretend nothing has changed. However, a care crisis will most likely occur and then people are thrust into making decisions without being armed with all the information.



"Dementia Conversations"

A FREE Alzheimer's Assoc. Training for Family Caregivers at NSES on Nov.14, 4-6pm

Register with Kathy Perrella, NSES, 978-624-2214

Caregiver Resources:

Our Family Caregiver Specialists have identified concerns & questions that are commonly discussed in support groups and counseling sessions. Check our blog at www.nselder.org for our monthly Caregiver topic. We'll provide you with some resources & options for handling specific issues.

And like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/NorthShoreElderServices

At North Shore Elder Services, our **Family Caregiver Specialists** are frequently consulted by concerned adult children as to whether or not aging parents need extra help to keep them living independently at home. “When do I know my aging parents may need extra help? They claim they are able to manage independently, refusing any outside help, but what do I do when I feel it is unsafe for them? Do I have to wait till there is a crisis to intervene?”

Kathy Perrella, Family Caregiver Support Program Manager, reassures caregivers that they do not need to have ALL the answers. “The important thing is that you are able to ask certain questions – not know all the answers. That’s where support groups and the Caregiver Specialists come in to play. Caregivers can use them as a resource and avoid feeling so overwhelmed. When you are feeling alone is the time to speak to us.”

Pat McMahan, Options Advisor, thinks it can be particularly challenging for adult children to be in a role reversal with their parent. “You have to sometimes learn to be more assertive in your relationship with a parent when you are acting as a caregiver. Your parent may not always like or accept that.”

The parent in need of some assistance may not agree to outside services because they feel they can do it all themselves. The adult children may not feel comfortable questioning that independence. “We had a family with two daughters who could see their parents needed assistance but they were unable to convince their parents of such. They asked NSES to meet with the family and explain what services could be provided. The advice coming from an outside source was more readily accepted.”

As caregivers, the best we can do is not look the other way and open the dialogue with our loved ones about aging issues. It’s never too soon to start that conversation but it can be too late. A proactive approach may help prevent a crisis down the road.

A quick checklist of **warning signs** that a parent needs help can be found at agingcare.com website. For guidance to starting “the conversation” check out caregiverstress.com website. North Shore Elder Services webpage at www.nselder.org will provide you with support group times and other services; and don’t forget to ‘like’ our Facebook page at [facebook.com/NorthShoreElderServices/](https://www.facebook.com/NorthShoreElderServices/) where we post articles of caregiver interest.

- Jayne Girodat, NSES

To read our blog in it’s entirety, you can find it under the heading News & Media at www.nselder.org