



## **CONSCIENTIOUS CARE**

### ***Turning Intentions into Action***

Most people who reach out to someone who is aging or ill make comments like:

*"I'm always here for you."*

*"I'm happy to help any way I can."*

According to Mary Doepke, RN, Owner of Home Helpers, "Comments like these tend not to be effective because the burden of following up is on the person we want to help. People are often reluctant to ask for help as they don't want to be a bother. Just because someone doesn't ask for assistance does not mean he or she does not want or need help. Don't wait for an invitation; instead put your words into action."

People facing any type of life-changing or life-threatening health-related issue tend to need three types of support: 1.) Emotional, 2.) Informational, and 3.) Instrumental.

EMOTIONAL support is more about being than doing. It is relational. You can help by:

- Visiting someone, talking on the phone and sending cards and flowers.
- Participating in social events such as going shopping, out for dinner, or to the movies.
- Being available to listen, watch TV, play cards, hold someone's hand, and other expressions of friendship and companionship.
- Asking someone questions that show you care. Often when we say "how are you?" the only answer we want is "I'm fine." Many people will not open up and share what's on their mind and heart until they believe you really care.

INFORMATIONAL support has to do with helping people become aware and gain knowledge that may be helpful now or in the future. You can be supportive by:

- Letting people know of resources you have found to be helpful (e.g. websites, books).
- Connecting your loved ones with others you know who have faced a similar situation. People with a similar disease are often "experts" in their own hopes, feelings, and concerns.
- Encouraging people to participate in a support group. Having an opportunity to connect with others who understand can often be encouraging.
- Inquiring if you can help someone process information he or she may already have. Likewise, you might also offer to be a sounding board for a person to bounce ideas off of.

INSTRUMENTAL support involves hands-on assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs). Some ways you can provide tangible assistance includes:

- Helping with grocery shopping and meals. You might even coordinate a meal plan
- Providing a ride to a doctor's appointment, running errands or dropping off and picking up kids from school and other activities.
- Assisting with house chores such as taking out the garbage, running the sweeper, doing the dishes, doing the laundry, cutting the grass, pulling weeds, planting flowers and the like.
- Arranging appointments and scheduling services.
- Organizing someone's mail and bills.

What are some others ways you can be supportive to someone who is aging or ill?

### *The Unthinkable Happens – Elder Abuse*

The July-August 2007 edition of the AARP Bulletin ran a story about a woman who was careful to save her money so she would have sufficient funds for her retirement. Apparently, the \$650,000 she had saved was taken by her great-niece who has Power of Attorney over her assets. So while the great-niece and her husband were driving his-and-hers Mercedes and living a lavish lifestyle, the woman who had carefully planned and saved for her retirement was devastated.

The unfortunate reality is that elder abuse occurs in the more affluent and less affluent communities, and everywhere in between. While the specific definition of elder abuse varies from state-to-state, common elements include abuse – both physical and psychological; exploitation, and neglect.

- *Abuse* refers to the infliction upon an adult by him or herself or others of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical harm, pain or anguish.
- *Exploitation* refers to the unlawful or improper act of a caregiver using an adult or his/her resources for monetary or personal benefit, profit or gain.
- *Neglect* means the failure of an adult to provide for him or herself the goods and services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish, or mental illness or the failure of a caregiver to provide such goods and services.

While many organizations attempt to estimate the number of elder abuse cases, the tracking requirements vary and it is believed that only about 20% of the cases are reported. Compounding the problem is that there is a general lack of clarity in regards to what constitutes abuse and neglect. Frankly, it is quite subjective. While the case referenced in the AARP article is clear and justice was served, there are many gray areas.

It is believed that many potential cases of elder abuse are not reported for reasons including:

- Lack of knowledge regarding what to do and whom to call.
- Willingness to report a situation (*e.g. People often minimize or rationalize the situation. There may also be a fear of retaliation.*)
- Ability of people to express themselves. (*e.g. People with dementia or who have had a stroke may have difficulty.*)
- Concern about falsely accusing someone.

Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers says “Trust your intuition. If something does not seem right, chances are it’s not.” In each county, there is an Adult Protective Services whose responsibility it is to investigate allegations of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Adult Protective Services is often a division of the counties Job & Family Services department. If you suspect any form of elder abuse, you may wish to discuss your concerns with a trained professional. In the Chicago suburbs, the contact numbers for Adult Protective Services are:

- Suburban Cook County 708-383-0258 or 708-354-1323 (La Grange area)
- DuPage County 630-407-6500

If you have concern for someone living outside of the Chicago area, to locate Adult Protective Services in a distant city, call the ElderCare Locator, a services of the U.S. Government, at 800-677-1116 for assistance.

### COMMUNITY CALENDAR



The following is a listing of local events that might be of particular interest to Baby Boomers and Older Adults.

#### REALITY CHECK – *Which Do You See?*

Let's face it; we live in a society that favors youth. Over the years, anti-aging has become a multi-billion dollar industry offering everything from creams and surgeries, to products such as Botox® and Rogaine®, and other so-called wonder treatments.

Findings from various research studies indicate that negative attitudes toward the aging process and older adults adversely affect the care and support provided to older people.

Perspective is a powerful influence on attitudes and behavior. If we hold mostly negative views about aging, this perspective will influence our interactions with older people.

A quick and simple way to gauge your perspective on youth and age is to look at the picture to the right. Do you see an elderly woman or a young girl? If you cannot see the older woman, you are not alone. The older person is often invisible in our society.



## CONTACT INFORMATION



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### HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*<sup>™</sup>

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs.

Home Helpers begins with a consultation, preferably at the care recipient's residence. This gives us the opportunity...

- To meet the client and assess the situation.
- To make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- To ensure the caregiver(s) assigned possesses the personality, skill set and passion that best meet your loved one's needs.

Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. Our caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, thereby minimizing client liability.

To learn more about Home Helpers give us a call at 708-783-1220 or visit us on the web at [www.MaryandMikeCare.com](http://www.MaryandMikeCare.com). All offices independently owned and operated.

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