



CONSCIENTIOUS CARE

Try Walking A Mile In My Shoes

Imagine what it must be like to have your life unexpectedly turned upside down. Michael Doepke, Co-Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs, encourages people to seriously consider how the effects of aging, a fall or a life-changing illness might affect your life and your family and friends.

As the U.S. population ages at record numbers, chances are you will take on the role of a family caregiver or become a care receiver. According to an Administration on Aging report entitled Profile of Older Adults: 2006, “Older adults have more chronic conditions, hospital admissions, doctor and ER visits, and expenditures for prescription drugs than younger age groups.”

While the hope is always to grow old gracefully, it is estimated that 9 out of 10 people will face health-related complications as they age. Doepke says, “Before you find yourself facing an unexpected crisis, give consideration to how your life would be affected if you or a loved one were told any of the following:

- The tests confirm cancer and we need to discuss treatment options right away.
- I am unable to renew your driver’s license as you have not been able to pass the mandatory vision test.
- To avoid complications and go full-term (on your pregnancy) you need to go on 24-hour bed rest immediately.
- As a result of the stroke, with aggressive rehabilitation there is a good chance you’ll be able to regain considerable function.
- I have serious concern about your mother’s safety if she continues to live at home alone.”

It tends to be difficult for people to walk a mile in the shoes of a person who is aging or ill. Doepke says, “We find that many people have no real concept of how an illness is likely to affect a person and his or her family. It often takes a personal experience to understand and appreciate the various psychosocial and physical limitations.”

At such time as you or your family is confronted with an unexpected health-related situation, know that Home Helpers is here to help. We provide in-home care similar to what is often provided by family members. Our services are designed to help people avoid isolation and maintain their dignity and independence. As a community service, we offer an educational series that addresses many of the common challenges people face as a result of aging or illness.

CONSIDER THIS...

HELPING OR ENABLING?

Finding the right balance between helping someone and encouraging the person to do for him or herself can be challenging. The tendency is to want to be compassionate and help make life easier, especially for someone who is aging or ill. The reality is that when doing things for people that maybe we shouldn't do, we run the risk of enabling.

When we enable, we allow a person to become dependent on us – known as codependency. According to Wikipedia, a person who is codependent is “someone who exhibits too much, and often inappropriate, caring for persons who depend on him or her.” To determine how much of an enabler you might be, consider how many of the following characteristics are present in relationships for which you are a caregiver.

- Do you do things for the purpose of avoiding conflict?
- Do the things your loved ones do or say tend to control the way you respond?
- Do you feel pity when loved ones face an undesirable situation?
- Do you make excuses to explain the things you do to help others?
- Does your taking on responsibility, make it possible for others to avoid responsibility?
- Do you take on others' problems so that they can avoid making difficult decisions?
- Do you put up with the behaviors of certain people only because they are family?
- Do you fear saying or doing something that you believe might hurt other people's feelings and damage the relationship?

In situations where there may be legitimate barriers that necessitate assistance such as lack of money or an inability to drive, the challenge is often making the choice to acknowledge and address the situation. While the balance between helping and enabling varies from person to person, the reason why people enable tend to be similar – to avoid conflict. Know that it is a choice – good or bad, to go along with something that may not be in a person's best interest than confront the situation. Here are a couple things you might consider when make choices.

- When a loved one expresses a need, regardless of how trivial you might consider his or her concern, do you set boundaries or do you continue to respond to requests over and over? Foregoing things that may be important to you for the sole purpose of accommodating another person, may become a choice you live with for life.
- Does your “helping” ultimately get the person what he or she wants without having to make changes. By avoiding situations we often find ourselves back in the same situation over and over.

As the saying goes, if a person is hungry you have two choices. Buy him a fish or teach him how to fish. If you buy him a fish today, chances are he will be hungry tomorrow. This is not to suggest that we should force people to do everything for themselves. Instead, this is to suggest that it may not make sense to rescue someone for the sake of rescuing without considering the consequences. Often it is our actions or inactions that set precedent and lead to expectations.

IN THE NEWS

Caregiving has fast become an expected life event, just like getting married, having children, working and retiring. If you are not already providing care or support for a family member or friend, chances are you will at some time during your life. People providing care and support for family members quickly find out it is a responsibility that involves both time and money.

According to a recent study entitled “Family Caregivers: What They Spend, What They Sacrifice,” the average annual out-of-pocket cost associated with caregiving for the elderly is \$5,500 if your local, and \$8,727 for long-distance caregivers. This is according to a survey conducted by the National Alliance for Caregiving and Evercare.

The findings were recently published in both the Wall Street Journal ([Study Finds Higher Costs for Caregivers of Elderly](#), November 19, 2007) and the Boston Globe ([Out-of-pocket elder expenses](#), December 16, 2007). The full study report is available on-line at <http://www.Caregiving.org>.

The study is significant in that the cost figures are considerably higher than previous estimates and more than the annual entertainment and health care expenses combined for the average household in America.

What often begins as a kind gesture and an incidental expense often becomes a significant commitment. Between the “hand on” support and the financial support families often provide, more and more people are making considerable personal sacrifices to provide for aging parents, an ill spouse or family member.

CONTACT INFORMATION



Serving the Western Suburbs of Chicago

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HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*TM

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 free in-home 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 selected 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. All offices independently owned and operated.
