

Tipsheet: Caring for Your Aging Parents

If you are providing care for aging parents, there are many places to go for help—including many United Way funded programs. These agencies offer a variety of resources and people who can share their own experiences dealing with older parents. Listed below are some ideas for making this process a normal, expected life phase—and not a crisis for your family.

1. **Plan for the future.**
Planning with your parents for their elderly years can prevent much stress. Sit down with them and discuss their expectations as well as your own.
2. **Find out how much time you have.**
Try to be realistic in terms of what you are able to do. What other resources are available to assist you and your parent?
3. **Balance other responsibilities.**
Does your workplace allow you to take sick time to care for a parent? If you have children, will you need to make arrangements for additional child care or other needs.
4. **Enlist other people.**
Neighbors, relatives, and friends may be able to assist your parents with shopping, rides to medical appointments, etc.
5. **Write down medical, financial/legal arrangements, personal preferences.**
Do your parents have a living will and power of attorney? Get everything out in the open before a parent becomes unable to make decisions.
6. **Watch for changes in your parents.**
Have they become neglectful of their appearance? Has the way they maintain their home changed? Are they becoming more forgetful? Has one parent become caretaker for the other? Be gentle. Remember that your parents have the right to make their own decisions as long as they are able. Parents don't want their children to take over their lives.

Source: Senior Resources Division of Volunteers of America, 612-331-4063

Resources: United Way 2-1-1™, a free and confidential 24/7 helpline that can connect you to over 40,000 community resources. Just dial 2-1-1 or 651-291-0211.