Changing Relationships: You and Your Aging Parent/Relative
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Camille Koonce is a certified case manager and aging life care expert. She has a diverse nonprofit background serving vulnerable populations including seniors, as well as children and adults with disabilities.

Camille has been working in the field for over 20 years and enjoys connecting with people all over the world and assisting them as they progress through life’s challenges in caring for their loved ones.
Learning Objectives

• Learn what your adult/elder loved ones are going through

• Discuss the changes that you will likely experience in your relationship with your loved one

• Learn how to begin difficult conversations

• Explore techniques to effectively communicate feelings and concerns

• Determine the level of care needed for your loved one

• Identify care and housing options
According to a 2012 Pew Research Center study:

- **4 in 10 adults** in the U.S. care for a child or adult who has significant health issues.

- The number of caregivers **increased 10%** between 2010 and 2013, and they average between 30 and 64 years old.

- **75% of those aged 65** and older have a chronic health condition, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.

According to a 2014 Pew Research study:

- **6 in 10 adults (61%)** say that if there came a time when they could no longer live independently, they would stay in their own home and have someone care for them there. Older men and women are equally likely to say this.

- Another **17%** of older adults say they would move into an assisted living facility, and **8%** say they would move in with a family member.
Aging

- Aging is a natural process.
- Older adults should be part of the decision-making process.
- Family systems can be flexible.
- Family systems have their own unique family culture and dynamics.
- Family members can play an active role.
- Families can overcome barriers to cooperation.
Changing Relationships

Impact on the Adult/Elder Dependent

• Increasing physical limitations
• Loss of independence and control
• Major lifestyle changes
• Changing social relationships
• Shift in family dynamics
• Changes in attitude and behavior
• Emotional roller coaster
Changing Relationships

Impact on **Other Family Members**

- Shift in family dynamics
- Sandwiched between generations
- Lifestyle changes
- Changes in attitude and behavior
- Emotional roller coaster
- High stress
The Level of Care

• **Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)**
  – Bathing
  – Dressing
  – Transferring (in and out of bed or chair)
  – Eating
  – Toileting

• **Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)**
  – Use of telephone (911)
  – Meal preparation
  – Shopping
  – Medication management
  – Money management
Based on the previous listing of ADLs and IADLs, which choice describes your aging parent/relative?

A. Doesn’t need assistance with any ADLs or IADLs
B. Needs assistance with ADLs only
C. Needs assistance with IADLs only
D. Needs assistance with both IADLs and ADLs
Suddenly You’re a Caregiver

Here are some helpful resources:

• **Area Agency on Aging** – [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)

• **Caregiver Action Network** - [http://caregiveraction.org](http://caregiveraction.org)

• **AARP Caregiving Resource Center** – [www.aarp.com](http://www.aarp.com)

• **Alzheimer’s Association** – [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
Adjusting to Your New Reality

• Your role has completely changed.

• Your parent or relative will depend on you more and more.

• You may find you have less time for yourself.

• While you may feel like you are now the parent, remember that you are NOT your parent’s parent.
Communication With an Older Adult

- Focus on the impact of the aging process.
- Identify potential areas of conflict.
- Anticipate resistance.
- Be aware of environmental distractions.
- Discussing issues of loss is very difficult.
- Hold conversations at eye level and in close physical proximity.
- Maintain a positive attitude, and use humor.
- Seek help from family, friends, and professionals.
Opening the Lines of Communication

Ways to Begin the Conversation

• Share your feelings.

• Be direct but not confrontational.

• Approach indirectly.

• Offer help.

• Be open to openings.
Pre-Talk Issues

- Family dynamics
- Family culture
- Resistant, reluctant, or ready?
- Observing and determining the level of care – minimum, moderate, or maximum assistance
- What is the goal?
- Next steps – What is the plan?
Care Options

• In-home care
• Care within the community
• Independent/retirement living
• Subsidized housing
“The Talk”
Family Meeting

- Involving the family
- Bringing up issues
- Sample topics for discussion:
  - Living arrangements
  - Day-to-day tasks
  - Driving
  - Physical, emotional, and social health
  - Financial status
The Actual Talk – Communication Tips

• Provide your parent with the options and decisions that will affect him or her.

• When possible, include your parent in the decision-making process.

• Don’t assume you know what your parent needs or wants.

• Pick your battles; focus on health and safety concerns first.
The Actual Talk – Communication Tips

• Discuss problems, and make an effort to find solutions.

• Listen to your parent’s feelings, and look for the meaning behind the words.

• Limit the discussion to one topic at a time.

• Avoid “you never” and “you always.”
Effects of Caregiving

40% to 70% of family caregivers have clinically significant symptoms of depression.

Approximately one fourth to one half of these caregivers meet the diagnostic criteria for major depression.
Create Your Support Network
Please refer to the *Resources for You and Your Aging Loved One* handout for a detailed listing of:

- Helpful Web sites
- Helpful associations and resources
- Helpful Web sites with templates
- Books
- Web site articles on communication
Contact Your Employee Assistance Program
Thank You

Questions?

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