

Family Dynamics or *How to Resist Choking Your Sister Because She Won't Help You with Mom!*



David A Smith MD, FAAFP, CMD
Geriatric Consultants of Central Texas, PA
mmLearn.org
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AND/OR

- I'm overwhelmed and my sister won't help me at all. Is there anything I can do?
- My brother is in denial. He doesn't want to believe that mother is in decline or that she is even showing signs of dementia.
- My sister wants to make all the decisions and I don't always agree with the decisions she makes.

AND/OR

- I think my brother is stealing/hurting/verbally abusing my mother.
- My siblings are sabotaging my attempts at caregiving.
- My parents didn't take care of me but I feel I need to care for them. This is a difficult transition for me.



Skills for the Child of Aging Parents:

1. recognizing functional and/or cognitive decline
2. psychosocial readiness for a reversal of roles
3. knowledge of options for surrogate decision making and when to use these



Skills for the Child of Parents:

cont'd

1). Recognizing functional & cognitive decline

- » Deferring to others
- » Asking for help or not asking and mistakes
- » Change in hygiene, personal or home
- » Falls
- » Getting lost
- » Poor driving skills

Don't be in denial. Don't be **buffaloed!**

AND/OR

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Competence and Mental Capacity

- Competence - legal/court, capacity-clinical/doctor
- Everybody is competent 'til adjudicated not
- Competence to stand trial, testamentary, financial and medical
- JOMAC
- Autonomy, Beneficence, Justice

Skills for the Child of Aging Parents:

cont'd

2). Readiness for role reversal

- » resistance
- » learned helplessness
- » resentment
- » doing what's needed is right



Skills for the Child of Aging Parents:

cont'd

3). Knowledge of options for surrogate decision making and when to use these.

- capacity and competence
- advanced directives; living will & POA allow autonomy after incapacity
- Texas Family Medical Decision Making Act
- POA; specific, springing, durable
- conservatorship & guardianship

Surrogate decisions should be substituted autonomy of the “ward”

- as they would have decided
- based on their values, culture, religious beliefs, self-concepts, not yours
- predicated on surrogate’s intimate knowledge of the “ward’s” wishes
- relieves surrogate of burden of choice, guilt, “playing God”

Try to make decisions with “assent” of the incapacitated “ward”

- when decisions are minor or insignificant
- when differences in outcomes of options is small
- empowers and respects the incapacitated “ward”



Family Decision Making

- Family interactions are already set by life experiences long before caregiving needed and these resist change
- Healthy families adapt while unhealthy families become rigid or disorganized under stress
- Stressors include the physical demands of care and the emotional demands of the situation, prior family discord, financial issues, competing demands

Characteristics of a Pathological Family System

- Enmeshment
- Isolation of family members from rest of society
- Lack of privacy within family
- Lack of generational boundaries
- Hyper-religiosity
- Lack of conflict resolution

Common issues regarding the “unequal yoke”

- 1). “I don’t have the time”
- 2). “I don’t have the money”
- 3). “I can’t bear to see Mom/Dad that way”

Common Issue-Time

They say they don't have time, so YOU do ?*!@

- Sacrifice of job, other family obligations
- You make the time or ante up for professional help!



Common Issue- Money

They don't have the money, but YOU do?*!@?

- » With clarity and documentation use the "ward's" money
- » If/when that's gone, legally obligated for the debts of parents use Medicaid, other programs
- » adult children are not and caregiving IS your contribution



Common Issue-Aversion *to Mom/Dad's Declining Condition*

They can't bear it, but you enjoy seeing it?*@

- Bathroom, bathing, pericare
- Feeding, dressing, medications
- Coping with behavioral outbursts
- Contagiousness of depression between caregivers and "ward"



Request for Help

- You ask directly and firmly and honestly and with demand for action or consequences

You don't ask directly, you forfeit right to gripe!

Remedies for the “Unequal Yoke”



- Other ways to do your fair share without money
- Greater share of caregiving, bookwork, running errands, yard work, doing something sibling needs done to offset caregiving effort.

Remedies for the “Unequal Yoke”

1. Consider sibs/family members' skills and circumstances realistically and factor these into the plan.
2. Don't shoot for perfect equality but when unequal effort is agreed upon, reward it fairly.



Remedies for the “Unequal Yoke”

cont'd

3. Decide on this before the caregiving effort becomes the way of life.
4. Review the understanding from time to time and it's best to put it on paper with signatures.



Remedies for the “Unequal Yoke”

cont'd

5. Cowboy up and tell other to, too
6. Consider equalizing the unequal effort by a
 - Sib/family member does something else for the caregiver to offset; Payment for time; Contracting for inheritance
7. When irreconcilable and serious differences-arbitrate (clergy, doctor, NH social worker, legal, APS)

Remedies for the “Unequal Yoke”

cont'd

8. Seek guardianship
 - » Court of law (annual reports)
 - » Not responsible personally for ward's expenses
 - » May, with court oversight, pay self expenses of care from Estate.



Additional Reading

- *Loving Your Parents When They Can No Longer Love You* Dr. Terry Hargrave
- Mom Always Liked You Best: A Guide for Resolving Family Feuds, Inheritance Battles & Eldercare Crises [Paperback] Arline Kardasis -
http://www.amazon.com/Mom-Always-Liked-You-best/dp/0615480888/ref=sr_1_12?ie=UTF8&qid=1340729174&sr=812&keywords=siblings+and+caregiving
- Doing the Right Thing: Taking Care of Your Elderly Parents, Even If They Didn't Take Care of You [Hardcover] Roberta Satow. Ph.d
http://www.amazon.com/Doing-Right-Thing-Elderly-Parents/dp/1585423920/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1340729683&sr=1-2&keywords=adult+siblings+elder+parents
- They're Your Parents, Too!: How Siblings Can Survive Their Parents' Aging Without Driving Each Other Crazy [Hardcover] Francine Russo
http://www.amazon.com/Doing-Right-Thing-Elderly-Parents/dp/1585423920/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1340729683&sr=1-2&keywords=adult+siblings+elder+parents

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