

# Caring For Our Aging Parents

TEXT BY JENNIFER BAILEY

Holidays mean coming home and reconnecting with our loved ones. For the children of aging parents, sometimes returning home — especially after some time has passed — can be shocking: When did Dad get so old? Has anyone cleaned the house in the last month? How come there is no food in the refrigerator?

As people grow older, their care needs can increase. But, it doesn't necessarily mean it is time to consider a move to an assisted living or nursing home facility. Frequently, all seniors really need to remain safely in the comfort of their own home is "just a little bit of help."



Maybe your parent simply needs someone to check in on him or her once a week to help with grocery shopping. Or perhaps there's a need for some housekeeping assistance and a ride to a medical appointment.

Certainly as the years go by, your parents may require greater assistance, but even managing activities of daily living — bathing, grooming, dressing, etc.— can be handled in their home with the help of a home care aide.

Home care aides are essentially caregivers who provide nonmedical, in-home care services. They assist with everything from food preparation to offering medication reminders, to monitoring a senior coping with dementia. Trained and state-certified to provide optimal care and comfort to seniors, these caregivers afford peace of mind to many families concerned about their aging parents while simultaneously allowing the seniors the ability to successfully "age in place" in their very own home.



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The services of a home care aide may be just one part of the puzzle though. What about other personal financial and legal concerns that can develop as a person ages? Issues like navigating complex medical care with multiple care providers, ensuring insurance coverage is in place to handle rising care costs, and planning for the day when a parent may be unable to make healthcare decisions. When sorting through these kinds of matters, the professional skills of a geriatric care manager may prove to be invaluable to you.

Geriatric care managers are experienced and knowledgeable resource advocates for seniors and their families. Upon hire, they can assess the care needs of a senior and then serve as an overall care coordinator for the aging person: researching and recommending care options, giving oversight to the management of multiple care providers and connecting seniors and their families to skilled professionals to help make sound financial plans and legal decisions.

The services of a geriatric care manager are especially appreciated in cases where the senior's family members live far away. A geriatric care manager can serve as the "boots on the ground" support to a senior when the family can't be there to monitor the person's health and wellbeing on a regular and frequent basis.

Geriatric care managers can deliver a much-welcomed calmness to families dealing with the stress surrounding the care of an aging parent. Their services

create a sense of control as families navigate this complex and emotional situation. They can help instill confidence when making important, sometimes life-altering decisions.

If raising a child "takes a village," appropriate care and planning for seniors at least takes a small squadron of supporters. Newer care options such as in-home care and geriatric care management can tame the often-bumpy road of helping a parent age

successfully. By offering professional assistance, these services can ensure the avenue is smoothly paved, allowing families to endure the ride with both "seat belts on" and cherished peace of mind. ♦

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