

NIH Work/Life Center **800-777-1720** **Resources**

Benefit Reminder

Free Resource & Referral Benefit

Child Care; Adoption; Schools/Colleges

Elder Care; Legal; Financial

“Faces & Phases of Life” Seminars

Career Counseling & Workshops

Parenting Festival – May 10!

Supporting Your Older Relative: Awareness & Communication



**Brought to You By:
The NIH Work/Life Center
April 5, 2006**

Seminar Agenda

- **Caregivers today – Balancing work & life**
- **Roadblocks to successful communication**
- **How to define communication priorities**
- **Strategies for effective communication**
- **Communicating across state lines**
- **Working with siblings**
- **Caregiver resources**
- ***What do YOU want to get out of this seminar today?***

Caregivers Today: *Who are the Caregivers?*

- ***Caregiving is a family affair***
 - 80% of all care provided to older people in our country is provided by family members
- ***Women are the primary caregivers but that is changing***
 - Men now make up 44% of the caregiver population
- ***65% of all caregivers are aged 35-64***
 - More and more workers are joining the sandwich and whopper generation (three generations) increasing caregiver obligations.
- ***Shrinking pool of family caregivers***
 - In 1990 there were 11 potential caregivers for each person needing care. In 2050 that ratio will be 4:1.
 - The workforce is aging, increasing caregivers in the workforce. Generation X and Y are smaller in numbers than baby boomers, reducing the number of caregivers in the future.

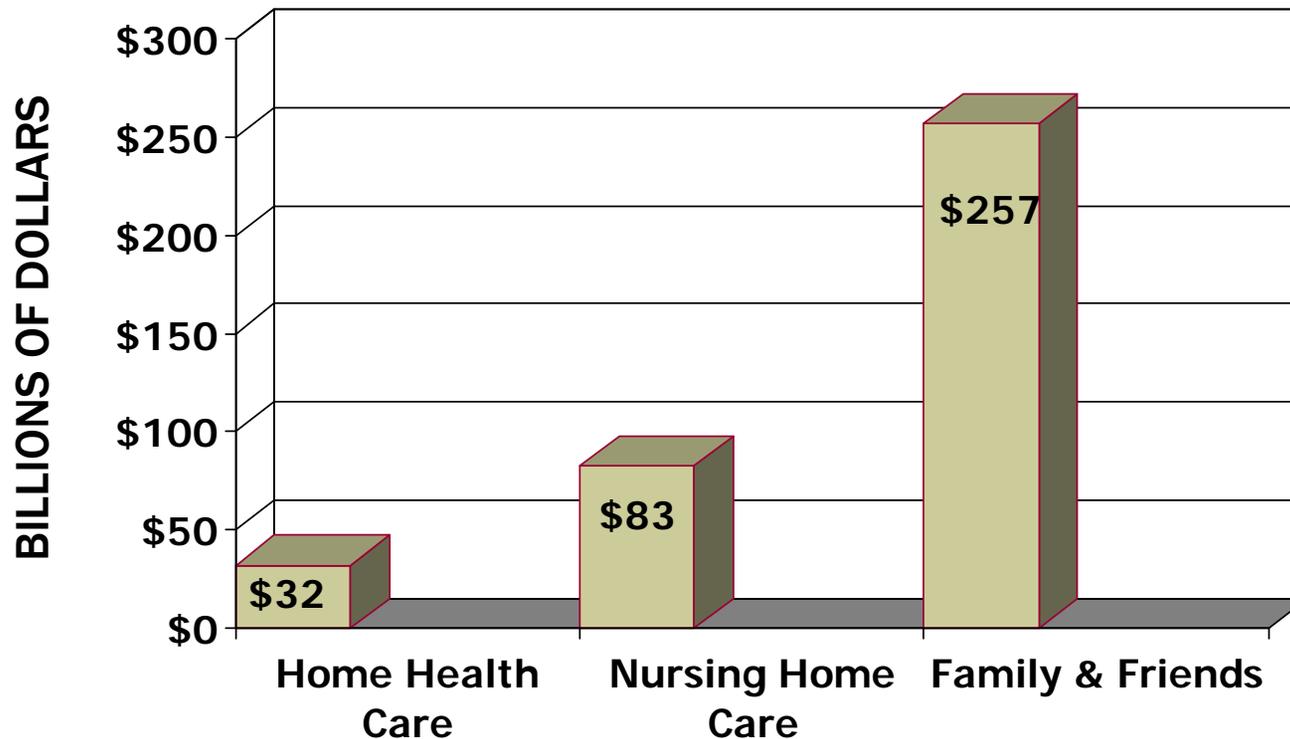
Caregivers Today:

Who are the Caregivers?

- **Over 60% of caregivers are working full or part-time. More than 40% also care for children under 18.**
- **47% of caregivers are employed and 71% are employed full-time.**
- **Caregivers dedicate on average 18 hours per week to provide care for older persons and even more when the person has multiple disabilities.**

Caregivers Today: *What is the Value of Care?*

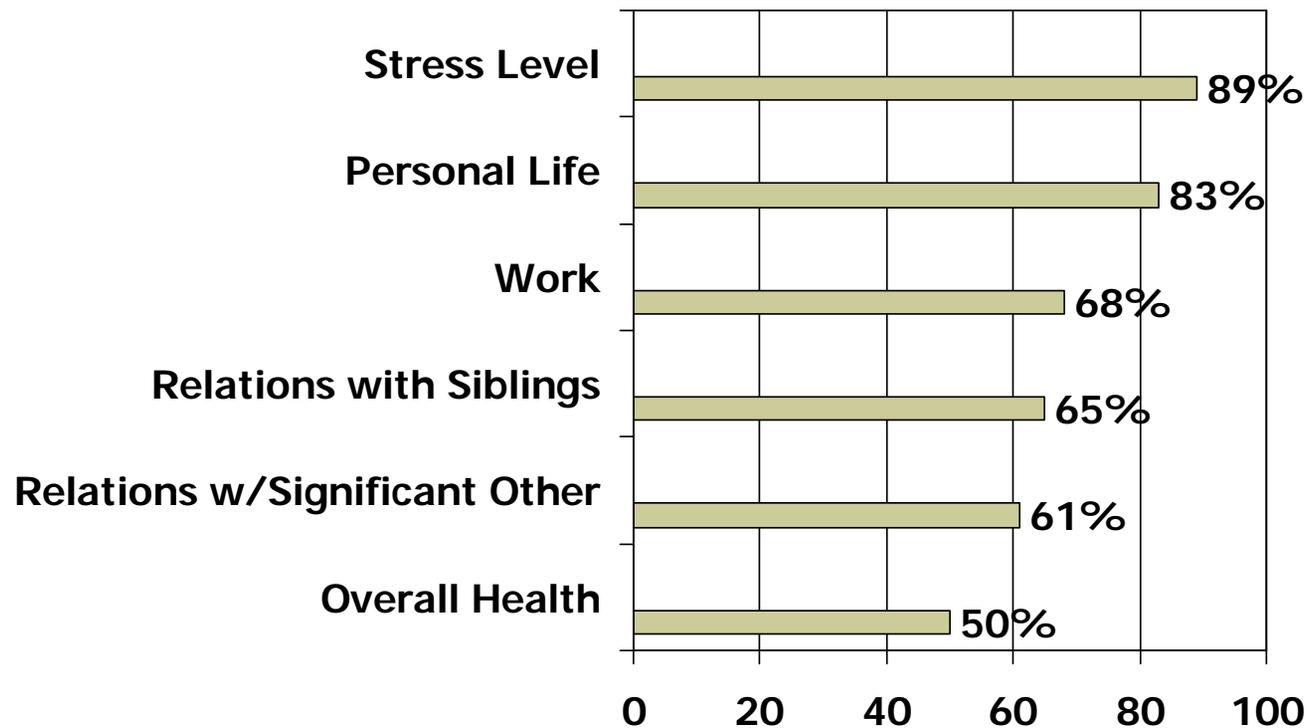
The value of the services family caregivers provide for "free" is estimated to be \$257 billion a year.



Caregivers Today: *What is the Impact?*

Nearly nine in ten caregivers say that their caregiving activities have affected their stress level and eight-in-ten say it has affected their personal life.

% SOMEWHAT/A GREAT DEAL CAREGIVING ACTIVITIES HAVE AFFECTED



Communication

- The most difficult subject to discuss with my older relative is...
- What makes it so hard is...
- When I discuss this topic with my older relative, I feel...
- My older relative probably feels...

Effective Communication Roadblocks:

Ideas about Aging

*When you think of an aging person...
what comes to mind?*

- **Preconceived ideas about aging**
 - Frail
 - Needs to be taken care of
 - Can no longer “think” for themselves
 - Confusion/dementia
 - Can not interpret the world we live in today
 - And the list goes on...

Effective Communication Roadblocks: *Myth of Role Reversal*

Relationships will never reverse – they will redevelop!!!

- Often adult children do not agree with the decisions their elder loved one makes
- Reality is few of us will “buy into” something we had no part in creating
- Crucial to include loved ones in conversations regarding their future

Effective Communication Roadblocks: ***Family Rules & Expectations***

- **Past “rules” are hard to break**
- **One person tends to emerge as the natural leader**
- **Roles of other siblings and loved ones**
- **Predetermined course of action**
- **Expectations**

Effective Communication Roadblocks:

Feelings

- Caregiver's mixed emotions
- Caregiver's anger
- Caregiver's guilt
- Impact of caregiver's additional responsibilities
- Older relative's feelings; loss of control
- Older relative's "resistance"

What if they don't listen to me???

Join the Club!

Did you always listen to them while growing up?!

- **Be sensitive to apprehension**
- **Revisit the conversation on a regular basis**
- **Allow your elder loved one to live by his/her wishes**
- **Quality of life vs. risk and danger**
- **Your comfort level compared to their living situation when there is no imminent risk**
- **NOW IS THE TIME TO INITIATE OR CONTINUE ACTION PLANS**

Communication Priorities: *What are Their Needs?*

Observe, Ask, Discuss Your Concerns

Without an imminent move or the start of in-home services, it is time to investigate and discuss needs.

- Social
- Nutritional
- Physical
- Emotional
- Medical

Communication Priorities:

Safety IS the Issue

- **If your loved one is at risk and you have gained legal authority to proceed; it may be helpful to elicit the assistance of a physician, case manager, or lawyer.**
- **If you believe that a risk exists, but you have no legal authority to proceed and your loved one refuses to cooperate, then seek the advice of an attorney well versed in elder law and competency issues or call your Area Office on Agency.**

Communication Priorities

- Discuss homecare vs. housing preferences
- Identify current financial needs and potential future needs - personal and financial records
- Find out what your loved one's wishes are relating to end of life care, funeral arrangements and medical directives, e.g., advance directives, health care proxy, living will
 - BEFORE a crisis happens

Communication Priorities

- Wills & Trusts
- Advanced Directives
- Power of Attorney
 - Standard Power of Attorney
 - Durable Power of Attorney
 - Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care
- Living Will

State laws vary, so check with your Area Office on Aging, a lawyer, or a financial planner about the rules and requirements in your State.

Effective Communication

- Pay attention to content and underlying feelings
- Reflect upon and paraphrase what older relative says
- Provide verbal and non-verbal encouragement
- See yourself as the “listener” - not the “changer”

Effective Communication

- Use open-ended questions
- Use “I” statements
- Agree to disagree
- Use silence and humor, when appropriate

Managing Difficult Conversations

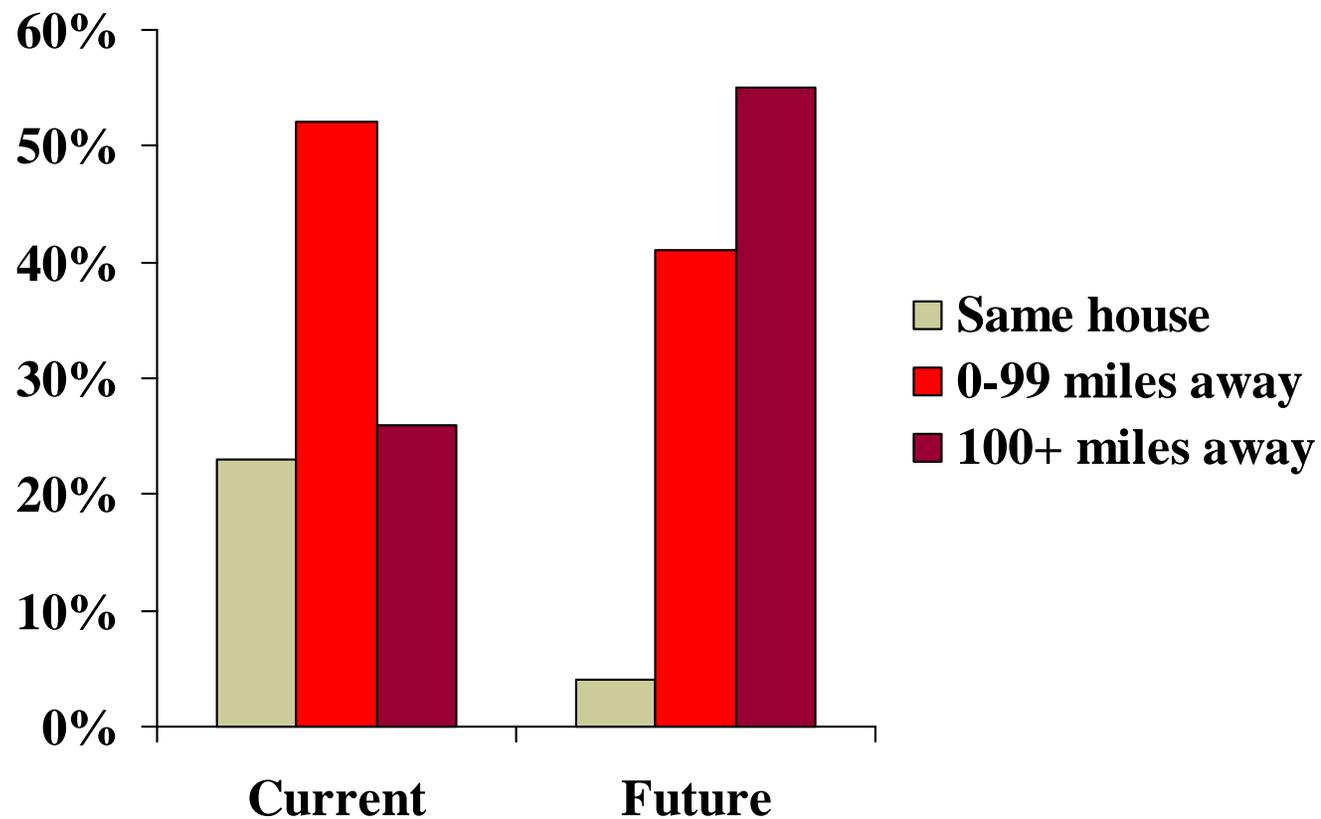
- **Decide on purpose and goal**
- **Anticipate older person's response**
- **Do your homework; check with a professional**
- **Choose a mutually agreed upon time to talk**
- **Choose battles carefully**
- **Make intentions clear**
- **Use the techniques of effective communication**
- **Allow older loved one as much control as possible**

SHARE Your Ideas

- **S - State** the main point of your concern/message
 - I'd like to talk to you about....
- **H - Highlight** other important relevant points
 - I feel it is important that I understand your preferences about...
- **A - Assure** the receiver's understanding
 - Do you understand why this is so important now?
- **R - React and reflect** about how the receiver responds
 - "I understand your concern about..."
- **E - Emphasize / summarize** your main ideas
 - We don't have to make definite plans right now, but lets contemplate the options and talk more about this next week

Communicating from a Distance

AT&T Survey: Distance Between Caregiver and Elder



Communicating from a Distance

- Know issues before talking
- Assign only a few tasks to each call
- Capitalize on relative's strengths
- Realize differences in approach and feelings
- Don't make assumptions
- Resist urge to hang up when frustrated
- Try writing letters, if appropriate

Working with Siblings

If you are the Primary Caregiver...

- **Involve family members now**
 - **Consider holding a family meeting**
- **Listen to the concerns of siblings and others**
- **Draft a “job description” listing all the tasks that need to be performed. Let your siblings help revise it, taking on some of the responsibilities**
- **Keep them informed and up-to-date as the situation changes**

Working with Siblings

If you are a secondary caregiver...

- **Maintain or renew your relationship with your elder by visiting or calling regularly.**
- **Support the primary caregiver by offering to help in the ways that you can.**
- **Be sure to thank the primary caregiver for the work he or she is doing.**
- **Lend an ear to the primary caregiver. Even if you do not have answers to the day to day dilemmas, you can provide opportunity for them to talk to help reduce their stress.**

Scenario – Home for the Holiday

- The possibility of relocating mom and dad closer to one of the kids
- The house and mom's personal hygiene not being what it's always been
- Your discomfort with dad's drinking
- Dad's agitation and forgetful behavior
- Mom's being worn out and her decreased mobility

Caregiver Support – Take Breaks!

It provides the family caregivers with the break they need, and also ensures that their elderly loved one is still receiving the attention that he or she needs.

- **Adult Day Care**
- **Informal and Volunteer Respite Care**
- **In-home Respite Care**

Caregiver Support - Resources

- **NIH Work/Life Resource & Referral – 800-777-1720**
 - Home Health Aides
 - Transportation
 - Meals
 - Housing Options
 - *How To Care for Aging Parents (book)*
- **National Institute on Aging Information Center**
(www.nia.nih.gov) 800-222-2225
- **Elder Care Locator (www.eldercare.gov)**
- **Family Caregiving 101 (www.familycaregiving101.org)**
- **Work/Life Seminars**
 - **May 24 “Legal & Financial Considerations”**