



HEALTH RESOURCES EAP Presents:

## Ways To Begin The New Year Successfully Talking To Aging Parents About Receiving Help

*This time of year is a busy one for families. First there's Thanksgiving, then the holiday season which leads seamlessly all the way up to the New Year celebrations. It's a time for family reunions and get-togethers, and for some it may be a full twelve months since parents, grandparents and kids have all spent time together.*

### **Making Plans For The Future**

If it's been awhile since you saw your aging parents, you may be shocked at how their health status may have changed in such a short time. Did you always have to shout so loud to be heard by your Mom? Or you may be struck by the realization that your Dad seems to be more grumpy and absent-minded than normal. Whatever your situation, the holiday season is a time to broach that difficult topic of "what happens next", and to start making plans for the future.

### **Posing Those Difficult Questions**

The idea of this discussion alone may be enough to increase your blood pressure, but no one ever said discussing your aging parents' future would be easy. As your parent's current or potential caregiver, it's up to you to start asking questions regarding your parents' medical, financial and housing plans and arrangements.

### **Aging Is Inevitable**

So why is it so difficult for children of aging parents to discuss the future? Each situation is obviously different, but for some of us it may be the sudden reversal of roles that seems so strange, or the fact that we are now meddling in our parents' personal lives. There may also be a reluctance to admit that the inevitable has happened; our parents have aged and that means that we too will most likely grow old some day.

### **It's Never Too Soon**

It's easier to make plans before a crisis, such as a fall or stroke, catches everyone off guard. It's much better to have a plan in place early, rather than scrambling around at the last moment. Also, many issues such as arranging for long term care insurance or finding a place in a nursing home must be taken care of well in advance.

### **Be Sure To Listen**

Plan your approach and timing carefully and you may be pleasantly surprised. Chances are, if it's a subject on your mind, it is on your elder's mind too. Remember this is meant to be a conversation between two people. Here are some tips to help you try and make the conversation go smoothly:

- Demonstrate genuine interest, concern and sensitivity.
- Be supportive and empathetic, not judgmental.
- Ask open-ended questions, giving your parent the opportunity to share the circumstances in his/her life with you.
- Be prepared to accept your parent's decisions and point of view, even if you find it hard to agree.
- Don't overwhelm your loved one with questions.
- Be sure to set up future times for more discussion, these kinds of issues take many conversations.
- Share with your parent your own thoughts and plans about your own aging.
- Let your loved one feel they are not alone in their concerns. Distributed under license. Parlay International 1960.035