

Are You Prepared for an Eldercare Challenge?

“We prepare for education and for marriage. We read 40 books on pregnancy and childbirth. But we don’t prepare for the idea that we’ll likely spend years taking care of an older relative. Instead, we cling to this hazy idea that we’ll all be healthy for many years then just die.”

With passages like this, Paula Span attempts to open our eyes to the reality of eldercare and the possibility that many of us will someday find ourselves “parenting our parents.” Her new book *When the Time Comes: Families with Aging Parents Share Their Struggles and Solutions*; Springboard Press, 2009, is recommended reading for a generation in denial that needs to realistically address challenges ranging from taking away a parent’s car keys to finding alternative living environments, possibly more than once.

The average lifespan continues to increase and that’s a good thing. But along with it come responsibilities that previous generations rarely had to face. Span observes, “When my dad was my age, both of his parents had died and he was retired. I’m never going to be able to retire and I might be caring for my dad when I’m in my 70’s and he’s in his 90’s.” Seventy-six million baby boomers are already entering their 60’s and probably find themselves in this same situation. Over 34 million working adults are already actively providing at least some care for frail, aging family members and most never anticipated nor prepared for this caregiver role. The surprise for many reluctant caregivers is that the experience can truly elevate one’s life. Span quotes gerontologist Kenneth Doka who observes that “the self-sacrifice that caregiving entails offers a deep sense of personal fulfillment. It demonstrates a persistent ability to transcend self, to sacrifice for another without regard to one’s own needs.” This may be the perfect antidote for many who have failed to find fulfillment living in a narcissistic, “me-centered” society.

Your Employee Assistance Program is aware of the daunting balancing act that you may be facing daily when attempting to meet both work and eldercare responsibilities. We are available to help you with a wide range of services and information, including:

- Personal stress management counseling
- Senior nutrition resources for in-home or communal meals
- Elderlaw resources and guidance regarding power of attorney
- Web resources to help you locate in-home care services
- Web resources to help you locate appropriate assisted living facilities
- Web resources to help you locate nursing home options
- Becoming knowledgeable about Medicare and Medicaid



Adults over 80 are the fastest growing segment of the population. Most will eventually become reliant on their adult children. The professionals at the EAP are committed to helping you care for those who once cared for you.