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MEMBER



Special needs require special lawyers.

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STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CAREGIVER STRESS

Last week's edition of the *Oast & Hook News* discussed how chronic stress can be dangerous to the life and health of caregivers. This week's edition, courtesy of the National Care Planning Council, will discuss strategies on how to reduce caregiver stress.

Ask for help. Most caregivers are thrust into their role without preparation because the need for care usually comes with little warning. Caregivers end up operating in a "crisis" mode – arranging medical care and living arrangements, scheduling care time, providing meals and household chores, etc. Because they are so stressed and burdened, they rarely take time to find out what resources are available to help them. Ironically, caregivers often sever ties with family, friends and support groups about this time just when help from these people is most needed.

As a caregiver you must ask for help. The stress of going it alone is dangerous to your health. If it's difficult for you to ask for help, then use an advocate – a sibling, a friend or a professional care manager – to arrange a meeting and get formal, written commitments from those people who are willing to help you. The extra help will give you breathing room to find all those resources that are there to help you.

Seek care management advice. A number of organizations and private companies will give you advice and guidance – many for free. If your care recipient has a low income, then you might get free help from your local Area Agency on Aging. A lot depends on available funds. Go to www.longtermcarelink.net/eldercare/ref_state_aging_services.htm for a list of agencies.

A good source of free professional advice is the rapidly growing business of non-medical home care companies. Most will offer free consultations, and these companies will also provide paid aides to help you in caring for your loved-one with such things as bathing, dressing, shopping, household chores,

transportation, companionship and much more. These people may also help you coordinate adult daycare or other community services. Go to www.longtermcarelink.net/a7homecare.htm for a nationwide list.

You may want to pay for a formal assessment and care plan from a professional geriatric care manager. Go to www.longtermcarelink.net/a2bfindmanager.htm for a nationwide list of these valuable care specialists. Even though it may cost you a little money to hire a care manager, this could be the best money you will ever spend. Care managers are valuable in helping find supportive resources, providing respite, saving money from care providers, finding money to pay for care, making arrangements with family or government providers, and providing advice on issues with which you may be struggling.

Take time off – find temporary substitutes. Taking a break from caregiving is just as important as taking a break from work or taking that long-awaited vacation. A care manager may be of help in selecting the best temporary help in order to give you a break. Or you may make arrangements with family or friends to give you a break from caregiving.

Make plans for funding future care arrangements for a healthy parent. The analysis of data from three national surveys (Mature Market Institute, National Alliance for Caregiving, and LifePlans Inc.) points out that employees caring for disabled elders who have long-term care insurance are nearly two times more likely to be able to continue working than those caring for non-insured relatives. In addition, working caregivers of those with long-term care insurance said that they were less likely to experience some type of stress, such as having to give constant attention to the care recipient or having to provide care while not feeling well themselves. Also, the group with insurance devoted more “quality time” – more companionship and less hands-on assistance – than the group without insurance.

See if your healthy parent can still buy insurance. If this parent can't afford it, then see if other family members might contribute to premiums. Some strategies involve using a reverse mortgage to buy long-term care insurance and life insurance for your loved one. You should also consider insurance for yourself so if you need care someday, then it won't be so stressful on your caregivers. To learn all about long-term care insurance and reverse mortgages, go to www.longtermcarelink.net.

Use assistive technology. There are a number of technologies to make sure your loved-ones are safe while you're away. Such things as emergency alert bracelets and pendants, GPS tracking for wandering, remote video surveillance, telehomecare, sensory augmentation, and all sorts of assistive devices to help disabled people cope on their own. Go to www.longtermcarelink.net for more information.

Remove non-caregiving stress from your job or at home. If you can remove other stressors in your life, then you can cope better with the stress of caregiving, which you may not want to or can't remove. The Internet is your best resource here. Go to www.google.com, type in “work stress,” and you can browse 3 million plus URL's. For home stress type in “home stress” and browse 4 million plus URL's.

Attend workshops or seminars to uncover additional strategies. The Utah Eldercare Planning Council offers worksite or community presentations on various eldercare issues. Community workshops like these are available across the country. These learning experiences are an opportunity to find help with your own caregiving situation. To learn more about the Utah Eldercare Planning Council please go to www.careUTAH.com.

Next week, the *Oast & Hook News* will offer lifestyle strategies that can reduce stress.

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients with their long-term care and care management needs.

Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

Meet Allie

Allie, aka Allie Cat, has been a member of the Oast & Hook family since May of 2007. William Oast and Andrew Hook befriended Allie while she was living in the garden between our Portsmouth office and the County Street Parking garage, hence her name. It only took a few days to decide that she would have a much better life inside than outside, and she has been living in the Portsmouth office ever since. Allie's primary jobs are to greet the staff every morning, keep the staff and clients entertained, play with her laser toys, chew on the (non-toxic) plant in the lobby, and take naps. Whenever the attorneys or staff members have a particularly stressful day, often the first thing they do for relief is look for Allie and get a hug. We are fortunate to have her as part of the team. Please visit Allie's webpage at www.oasthook.com/allie.php.



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