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CAREGIVER BURNOUT – ADULT DAY CARE SERVICES TO THE RESCUE

If you are a primary caregiver for a loved one, you are well aware of the daily stress and emotional and physical impact it can have on your health.

Susan learned this first hand when she and her husband, Tom, brought his mother home to live with them. Tom's mother suffered from dementia and had to be watched constantly. Susan found that when you become a caregiver, you start by giving up a few things you usually do for yourself in order to make up for the time needed for caregiving. Even though your service is one of love and you are willing to do the sacrifice on behalf of your loved one, you find yourself giving up more and more as time goes on.

"As a caregiver," Susan laments, "you are often frustrated that you can't do enough for your loved one and so guilt and feelings of inadequacy set in. Couple that with feelings of being unduly burdened, of resentment, of stress and then of more guilt at having those feelings."

She continues, "Now don't get me wrong, I am very glad that I spent those years in caregiving. There were many cherished moments with Mom that only I experienced."

In order to enjoy those moments and sustain your caregiving momentum, a little respite is essential.

An article posted on About.com by Carrie Hill, Ph.D., states:

"Caregivers who use respite care often tell me that although caregiving is one of the hardest jobs they've ever had, they wouldn't trade the experience for anything. Helping a family member or close friend who has Alzheimer's disease can provide a sense of purpose and great satisfaction. Still, the emotional and physical demands of caregiving make it hard to be a caregiver 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Without respite care, a temporary break from

the demands of caregiving, you may be more susceptible to the effects of caregiver stress, such as depression, exhaustion, and other health problems.”

Be on the lookout for caregiver burnout. It can creep up on you without your noticing it. Caregiver burnout symptoms can include:

- Depression;
- Anxiety, irritability, or anger;
- Feelings of exhaustion;
- Self-criticism;
- Withdrawal from usual activities;
- Trouble with handling caregiving responsibilities; and
- Substance abuse.

The need for support for caregivers at home has received national recognition. State Human Resource Departments and Area Agency on Aging Services are offering more counseling and respite services for caregivers. The ARCH National Respite Services is also an organization that is reaching out to educate and support caregivers in many states. There is, however, one service that is highly valuable but underused:

Adult Day Care

Adult day care respite is two-fold. It gives the caregivers much needed time to themselves, and it gives the caregivers' loved ones social and interactive therapy with their peers.

Many adult day services offer such things as:

- Social activities; music, movies, crafts, excursions;
- Meals;
- Fellowship support;
- Assistance with daily living;
- Nursing care;
- Help with activities of daily living;
- Medications;
- Physical therapy; and
- Transportation.

Finding an adult day care provider takes a little investigating on your part. It is important to know what you are getting and that your loved one is comfortable with his or her new surroundings.

First: Ask for recommendations. Check with your local senior center, Area Agency on Aging Services, mental health centers, physician, clinic, family, friends and neighbors. The best recommendation is by someone who has used the adult day care or is familiar with those who run it.

Second: Phone and ask the facility to send you information. Ask specifically to be sent the application, eligibility requirements and payment information. Ask to see the calendar of activities, menus, hours and days of operation to be sure they fit your schedule. Ask about availability of transportation to and from the location and what is the cost. Ask who runs the facility. Is it private, non-profit or a franchise or part of an assisted living facility or a nursing home?

Third: Visit the adult day care facility. Go visit the provider location along with the person for whom you are providing care. See if the staff is friendly. Check that it is clean and odor free. Ask about the experience of the staff. Request a list of references.

Fourth: Find out the cost and payment requirements. A survey from NCOA/NADSA provides the following information on fees: "Fees for Adult Day Care providers range from \$25 per day to \$70 per day, with the average around \$50 per day. Many facilities provide services with a sliding fee scale."

One last word of advice. Don't feel guilty about taking your loved one to adult day care.

Susan's mother-in-law complained bitterly about leaving home and going to the adult day care facility, expounding on how Susan just didn't want her around anymore. This only increased the guilt Susan was already feeling, but Susan was also determined that she needed the respite time the day care would provide and she pressed forward. That evening as Susan picked up Tom's mother, who suffered from dementia, Tom's mother exclaimed, "That was the nicest resort I have ever been to!"

To learn more about the AOA National Caregiver Support Program go to: www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/caregiver.aspx.

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients with their estate, investment, insurance, long-term care, special needs and veterans' benefit planning.

Employment

Oast & Hook is seeking a Geriatric Care Manager to assist our clients with monitoring and maintaining life care plans. Prior experience working with elderly clients in one or more of the following capacities is required: assisted living administrator, nursing home administrator, hospital discharge planner, social worker or registered nurse.

Client care management:

Assess the level and type of care needed by the client. Work with the family to develop an appropriate care plan for the client. Take steps to start the care plan, and monitor the care plan to keep it effective. Make sure care is received in a safe and disability friendly environment. Assist the family by resolving

family conflicts and other family issues relating to long-term care. Be an advocate for the care recipient and the family caregiver. Provide assistance with placement in assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Oversee care when the family is out of town. Conduct ongoing assessments to monitor and implement changes in care. Coordinate the efforts of key support systems. Help qualify for any public benefits available, like Medicaid, veterans benefits, waiver programs. Arrange for the services and find appropriate solutions to avoid a crisis.

Public Benefit Administration:

Experience working with hospital discharge planners, the Department of Medical Assistance Services, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, and insurance companies is essential.

Must have excellent relationships within the long-term care planning community and project a positive professional demeanor at all times. Must understand coverage and qualifying criteria for Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance plans. Excellent oral and written communication skills. Ability to work effectively with others. Must have strong social skills to assist in marketing and networking. Good organizational and time management skills.

Please send your resume, salary history for last five years, and references to buhr@oasthook.com or fax to 757-397-1267.

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