

Care Givers; Take Care!



**Principles and Practices for
Balancing Work, Life and Family
Caregiving.**

**Based on the Book: Who Cares? The Give and Take of
Family Caregiving, by Jerry Bridge**

Challenge:

There's a very good chance you will be or already been impacted by the caregiving experience, to care for aging parents, family members or friends. You are among the exploding class of 'working caregivers' facing the tremendous, sometimes devastating impacts on health, family and finances.

Promise:

- By taking better care of yourself – physically, emotionally, spiritually – you'll have more power and peace of mind when, and if, you are called upon to be a caregiver.
- By understanding the potential financial implications ahead of time you may be more able to mitigate the impacts: loss of income, reduced pension and social security.
- Taking action – NOW – to improve both your physical and financial health is a gift you can give yourself AND your future caregivers!

Caregiving Facts for Americans Workers

- The number of workers with eldercare responsibilities is rising dramatically. More than 40% of US workers have provided care for an aging relative or friend in the past five years. About half of the American workforce should expect to be providing eldercare in the next five years.
- Adult children 50+ who work and provide care to a parent are more likely to have fair or poor health than those who do not provide care to their parents.
- For women, the total individual amount of lost wages due to leaving the labor force early because of caregiving responsibilities equals \$142,693. The estimated impact of caregiving on lost Social Security benefits is \$131,351. A very conservative estimated impact on pensions is approximately \$50,000. Thus, in total, the cost impact of caregiving on the individual female caregiver in terms of lost wages and Social Security benefits equals \$324,044.

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- For men, the total individual amount of lost wages due to leaving the labor force early because of caregiving responsibilities equals \$89,107. The estimated impact of caregiving on lost Social Security benefits is \$144,609. Adding in a conservative estimate of the impact on pensions at \$50,000, the total impact equals \$283,716 for men, or \$303,880 for the average male or female caregiver 50+ who cares for a parent.
- Other affects of caring for parents are depression, chronic disease, time spent with children and grandchildren. Caregivers of aging parents often find themselves “sandwiched” between assisting two generations and face difficult, stress-inducing decisions about how to allocate resources. They may also have less money available to help their children as they prepare for college, marriage, and owning their own homes.

Assessment:

What’s your caregiving story? How have you been impacted by the caregiving experience? What if anything, have you done to prepare?

What are you doing – NOW – to take better care of yourself, physically, emotionally or spiritually? Where do you need to improve? What support or resources do you need?

Personal Impacts

- Feeling overwhelmed, guilty, depressed, or stressed
- Feelings of resentment, anger, frustration, with loved ones, siblings
- Feeling alone, isolated, burdened.
- Feelings of fear, terror, avoidance around death and dying.
- Feelings of uncertainty and the unknown.
- Unhealthy habits- Internalizing negative feelings, drinking too much, self medicating, shutting down, becoming a martyr.
- Physical exhaustion, lack of sleep, poor diet, lack of exercise, not taking care
- Impact on productivity, time away from work, lack of ability to focus or concentrate
- Family issues, conflicts with spouse, feeling misunderstood, cultural differences around care giving.

Logistical -Medical -Legal-Financial

- Home Care
- Doctor visits
- Medication management
- Moving parents away from home
- Taking care of funeral planning
- Shopping
- Legal, power of attorney, medical directives
- Bill paying
- Funeral arrangements

What can be done to mitigate the impacts on your productivity, stress, physical and mental health? Principles, Practices and Resources to Empower You and Mitigate the Impacts on Productivity, Stress and Health.

Physical



Mental-Emotional



Social-Structural



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MY PHYSICAL & FINANCIAL HEALTH FITNESS PLAN

Actions I will **take now** or **schedule** to be more physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially fit:

Physical	Emotional	Spiritual	Financial

"I stand for a future in which I am well; physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially. As a way of accomplishing this, I promise to take action, get support, and/or schedule the things I have written above. By making the commitment to take better care of myself – NOW - I'll be more able and effective at caring for my loved ones in their time of need, and less likely to be a burden(or pain in the ass) to my future caregivers (AKA-my children).

Signed _____ **Date:** _____

Implications for Caregivers on Finances and Health (Met Life Study)

Both male and female family caregivers need to be more aware of the long-term financial implications of leaving work or dropping back to part-time in order to care for older relatives. They also need to be thinking about the potential average \$304,000 loss to their retirement funds (i.e., wages, Social Security benefits, and private pensions). Since the impact is greater for women (approximately \$40,000 more), women in particular should think through the impact of quitting their jobs, dropping back to part-time, or taking a lower-paying job because of the flexibility for caregiving it may offer.

Family caregivers should also think about their own health and be careful to maintain their health even while focused on the needs of their loved ones. It is easy to forget regular check-ups, mammograms, Pap tests, prostate exams, flu shots, and other preventative services when you are taking care of someone else.

Workers who provide basic personal care report poorer health; Many studies have found that stress, time away from family/friends, increased medication use, lost time at work, misuse of alcohol or prescription drugs, incidence of coronary heart disease, and depression are all negatively associated with family caregiving.

Implications for Employers

Employers need to provide workers with the best possible retirement planning information. Now that many employers offer 401(k) plans or other defined contribution plans where the worker decides how much money he or she wants to set aside for retirement, the need for information to help with planning becomes extremely important. **Employees in the 50+ age range — often their peak earning years — are also at the greatest risk of being a caregiver for an older relative.**

Employers can provide workplace accommodations — such as **flex-time** or **family medical leave (FMLA)** — so that caregivers can continue to stay in the workforce while caring for a relative. Employers can encourage workers to use free resources, such as the **Eldercare Locator** online or by toll-free phone (1-800-677-1116) to find services that can help with caregiving.

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Employers also need to consider the health implications for their caregiving workers. Many studies have shown that caregiving can cost productivity and “presenteeism” in the workplace, as well as cost as much as an additional 8% in health care costs for employers. Stress is a big factor in caregivers’ health. Employers can ensure that all workers have the opportunity to know about and access **stress management programs**, as well as other preventative health services.

Recommendations for Employers (AARP Fact Sheet)

Eldercare Benefits Can Help Working Caregivers Better Manage Their Caregiving Responsibilities and Their Jobs.

U.S. businesses first began adding eldercare resources to the range of work-family programs in the mid-1980s. These early workplace supports were modeled after childcare programs that included resource and referral services. Studies have documented that implementation of eldercare programs can benefit both employers and employees. **Eldercare programs improve worker retention, productivity, stress levels, and health among workers.**

Examples of such workplace programs include referral to caregiver resources in the community, on-site support groups for working caregivers, and discounted backup home care for emergency needs. Employers have found eldercare benefits to be a competitive advantage both in new employee recruitment and retention of existing employees.

Workplace Policies that Support and Accommodate Working

Caregivers Show Business Benefits. Numerous studies have found that flexible workplace policies enhance employee productivity, lower absenteeism, reduce costs, and appear to positively affect profits. They also aid recruitment and retention efforts, allowing employers to retain a talented and knowledgeable workforce and save the money and time that would otherwise have been spent recruiting, interviewing, selecting, and training new employees. In addition to specific eldercare benefits, flexible work options, family leave, and paid sick days are vital policies for working caregivers. These workplace benefits can help working adults balance their work, personal lives, and family.

On Line Resources:

- Eldercare Locator- www.eldercare.gov
- CareConnectUSA (financial assistance)- www.careconnectusa.org
- Argentum- <http://www.alfa.org/>
- Eldercare Resources- www.eldercareresourcesusa.com
- Medicare - www.medicare.gov/campaigns/caregiver/caregiver.html
- National Alliance for Caregiving - www.caregiving.org/resources/
- Alzheimers.Gov - www.alzheimers.gov/caregiver_resources.html

Books:

- Who Cares? The Give and Take of Family Caregiving, by Jerry Bridge
- Where is Whitney Now? A Husband's Alzheimer's Journal and Caregiver's Guide, by Don Cramer
- Juggling Work and Caregiving, By Amy Goyer
- Care of the Soul in Medicine, by Thomas Moore
- The Last Lecture, by Randy Pausch
- Grace and Grit. Insights to Real-Life Challenges of Aging for Adult Children and their Parents, by Fritzi Gros-Daillon
- CrazyBusy. Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! By Edward Hallowell, MD
- The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying by Sogyal Rinpoche
- A Year to Live. How to Live This Year As If It Were Your Last, by Stephen Levine