

How Do You Cope With Aging Parents?

Letting Your Parents Know You Are Supportive.

The Plan

Reassure Your Parents

Let them know that you are supporting them and can be depended upon to help them solve their problems. Emphasize family bonds.

Educate Yourself

You (and your parents, if able) need to become information specialists in areas relevant to their changing situation.

- Legal matters, including wills & property ownership.
- Financial arrangements.
- Healthcare resources and support services.
- Housing and recreation resources.
- Current knowledge on the aging process.

Take Stock

As health and living problems arise, obtain an assessment of your parent's problems and needs. Such an assessment would best be done by a professional geriatric consultation team, including a physician, nurse, and social worker. A lawyer and financial advisor may also be helpful in some instances.

Help Parents Retain Control



Respect your parents need to make their own decisions and remain in control of their lives. Limits are often placed on their autonomy due to sickness, lack of financial resources, and the quality of family relationships. However, a degree of participation in the decision making process is usually possible.

Avoid making major decisions in haste.

Share the Work

Don't try to do everything yourself. Share the emotional and physical responsibilities among family, friends, professionals and private pay assistance.

Think Creatively

Brainstorm with family and friends about ways to help older family members maintain identity, continue interests on some level, and have as much decision making opportunity as possible.

Make Small Changes

Opt for the smallest change possible at each step. Don't be overwhelmed by the complete care that may be necessary in 5 years when partial help may be all that is needed right now.

Take Some Risks

Be willing to take some risks if your parent is capable of realistically recognizing them and chooses to take them. Or at least, be open to a compromise solution.

Get Counseling

Obtain professional counseling if the situation and the relationship with an elderly parent become overwhelming.