



Creative Care  
Management

*Caring since 1991*



# Caregiver Counsel on

## First Aid for the Caregiver

RESOURCE  
COUNSELOR  
ADVOCATE  
FRIEND





CHARLOTTE BISHOP,  
Founder of Creative Care Management, Inc.

**Creative Care Management (CCM)** is a professional story and a **personal story**.

Charlotte Bishop started CCM more than 20 years ago. Soon after that Charlotte's husband was diagnosed with brain cancer. Charlotte became her own spouse's personal case manager until his untimely death three years later. This personal journey evolved into a professional journey and certification as a Geriatric Care Manager (GCM) and the part of **CCM** dedicated to "Serving Elders and Others."

**Creative Care Management** is a team of certificated professionals providing answers to older adults in Illinois and their families.



# Pass the Mayo...

## & Other Advice for the Sandwich Generation

Caregivers in America don't have just a full-time job; they often have two or even three full-time jobs which may include their salaried position, caring for children, a relationship with a partner and then there is an older loved one. That is why we call the Boomers the Sandwich Generation - because they are in between two or more sets of demands (slices of bread). If you are a caregiver, you probably know that the number of hours this job demands is onerous. According to a recent AARP survey, caregivers report an average of more than 20 hours a week taking care of an older loved one. This is on top of the "day job" they already have as well as any other family duties they may have for a spouse or children at home. So who is taking care of the caregiver? One person who probably is not caring for the caregiver is the caregiver him/herself. If you are a caregiver for an older adult or someone else with special needs, try out these suggestions so that you can survive and even thrive in your caregiving responsibilities.



### Remember to laugh

*It is no surprise that caregiving is stressful, and one of the casualties often is one's sense of humor. Laughter is a great stress-reliever that we have to give in to regularly, because it will make everything else a lot easier.*



### Remember to get help for the emotional demands

*This can be in the form of a support group or perhaps a counselor or your cleric. Talk with someone who will help give you some coping tools and understand why you need them.*



### Remember to be "normal"

*Caregiving can be demanding and often unpredictable in ways that tend to take over one's life. Perhaps you used to have a favorite television program or you enjoyed going for brisk morning walks or some other habit that gave you pleasure. Indulge yourself with one of these returns to normalcy and you will be more refreshed to return to your caregiving after.*



### Remember to check up on your health

*You probably attend all the doctor's visits for your loved one, but when was the last time you had a check-up yourself? It is not just emotional health that can suffer under the stress of caregiving, so keep healthy.*



### Remember your friends or colleagues

*Caregiving can squeeze one's social life tremendously, and isolation can only make the weight all the heavier. Take time for a lunch or coffee with people you like, and some of the stress will go down a notch or two.*




### Remember to forget some things

*You may have a whole list of "must dos" on a weekly basis, and it is really acceptable to drop some items from your list. Hire someone to do your housekeeping or shoveling the walk or mowing your lawn.*



# BECAUSE ACCIDENTS HAPPEN



**A**s a caregiver for an older adult you cannot prevent a medical emergency, but you can prepare for one. Even if you are a distance caregiver, you will find that you can have your loved one help in preparing an "emergency kit" just in case. As a geriatric care manager, I help families customize their preparations to the particular health needs of the loved ones.

For starters, both a caregiver and an older adult should have what I refer to as the "grab and go list." Should there be an emergency, both of you should have a list which may include the following information or photocopies of important documents:

**B**ecause the emergency may not be medical, but instead may be a natural disaster, it is a good idea to have the grab and go kit in a waterproof container and/or fireproof safe. For the same reason, if you are a distance caregiver, it is a good idea to also have on hand the names and phone numbers of neighbors or friends who could be called to check on your loved one. If you have not met these individuals, use your next trip to see your loved one as an opportunity to also introduce yourself to these friends or neighbors. It will make any later, long distance communication a lot easier.

Again, thinking about a natural disaster, help your loved one devise a home escape plan should they have to leave home quickly. And have at least two escape plans in case of a disaster that can damage the structure of a home, like a tornado, hurricane or earthquake. Help your loved one also to have a plan for sheltering in place for emergencies like a tornado or hurricane. Especially in the case of the latter, you should also set aside cache of fresh water, dry goods, a flashlight, battery-operated radio, whistle and crowbar in the event the emergency lasts for more than a day.

- ✓ identification like social security card, passport or drivers license
- ✓ health insurance cards, both Medicare and any secondary carrier
- ✓ recent medical summaries or immunization records
- ✓ a list of current records or prescriptions
- ✓ a list of important contacts with phone numbers
- ✓ veterinary records if your loved one has a pet
- ✓ wills, advanced directives or powers of attorney



For more details about specific responses to natural disasters, go to the FEMA web resource (<http://www.ready.gov/>). For more advice on preparing for - and facing - medical emergencies, this is a good resource (<http://emergency.tufts.edu/guide/medical-emergency/>).





# TAKE THE TEST



There is no doubt that being a caregiver to an older loved one can be a positive and rewarding experience and it may be a way to give back. But the caregiving demands can become onerous; the caregiver can feel stretched between their obligations to their own children and their partners. Or the day job can be demanding in and of itself without the "extra shift" that caregiving heaps on a person. As a geriatric care manager, I have seen caregivers who are stressed, but not nearly as often do I see a caregiver who talks about this burden.

It brings up too much guilt, or they feel they just need to "get through" the next week or month, but the weight of the added responsibilities can be huge to the point of breaking. It is important to find relief before the caregiver reaches that point, and there is a way to measure caregiver burden before one reaches a breaking point.

Consider the following & rate each on a scale where

0=never 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=quite frequently & 4=nearly always

He/she needs my help to perform many daily tasks.	0 1 2 3 4
He/she is dependent on me.	0 1 2 3 4
I have to watch him/her constantly.	0 1 2 3 4
I have to help him/her with many basic functions.	0 1 2 3 4
I don't have a minute's break from his/her chores.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel that I am missing out on life.	0 1 2 3 4
I wish I could escape from this situation.	0 1 2 3 4
My social life has suffered.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel emotionally drained due to caring for him/her.	0 1 2 3 4
I expected that things would be different at this point in my life.	0 1 2 3 4
I'm not getting enough sleep.	0 1 2 3 4
My health has suffered.	0 1 2 3 4
Caregiving has made me physically sick.	0 1 2 3 4
I'm physically tired.	0 1 2 3 4
I don't get along with other family members as well as I used to.	0 1 2 3 4
My caregiving efforts aren't appreciated by others in my family.	0 1 2 3 4
I've had problems with my marriage (or other significant relationship).	0 1 2 3 4
I don't get along as well as I used to with others.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel resentful of other relatives who could but do not help.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel embarrassed over his/her behavior.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel ashamed of him/her.	0 1 2 3 4
I resent him/her.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel uncomfortable when I have friends over.	0 1 2 3 4
I feel angry about my interactions with him/her.	0 1 2 3 4

ADD UP YOUR SCORE & ENTER IT HERE >>

*Add up your score, and if you are close to or above a 36, it is time to consider help.*

At least consider help with some of the supportive activities you do for your loved one. You will find senior residential communities or centers who provide respite care to give you the break you may need. Also, look to what you rated "quite frequently" or "nearly always." If you have a cleric, a counselor or therapist, these may be good points for your conversation. Also, do a search of my blog here using the keyword, "caregiver." One of the topics I have addressed a lot is Caring for the Caregiver. Take care of you! For more on this scale (and there are others as well) go to: <http://www.fullcirclecare.org/caregiverissues/health/burden.html>


 A woman with blonde hair, looking distressed with her hand to her face, overlaid with a yellow and orange geometric design.
 

# AVOIDING

# CAREGIVER BURNOUT

**A**t the point in life when one of the family steps up to be a caregiver to an aging parent, all the “children” have already grown and flown the nest. But as siblings begin to communicate and delegate to help mom or dad, a lot of the same sibling issues from when everyone was younger and lived under the same roof may resurface. The result can be inequity in the duties expected of each of the siblings and stress for everyone. But it does not have to be that way if the family can set up some rules for communicating and sharing the caregiving load. Here are some useful “Do’s” and “Don’ts”:

## **Do be realistic about what you can and cannot do as the caregiver:**

One thing I always tell people is that burnout is a self-inflicted syndrome when a caregiver takes on more than they can handle. Share the load by making a list of tasks so that others in the family can lend a hand in errands. If something can be accomplished by a phone call, anyone can help.

## **Don’t wait for an emergency to talk.**

If you are the designated caregiver, get in the habit of having a regular family briefing. Those who are not there on a daily basis need to know what is going on so that they can lend their help and their support wherever possible.

## **Do share how you feel about the workload.**

You will only grow to resent the other siblings if you don’t talk with family about how you may really feel. And at the very least, siblings can lend moral support...a sympathetic ear when you need one.

## **Don’t forget that respite care is good for all.**

If you find others inside and outside your family who may be caregivers to someone else, you can share bring together a number of older parents who benefit from the social stimulation while the absent caregivers benefit from the break.

## **Do appreciate that technology facilitates better communication.**

Don’t hesitate to use the information highway – complete with WebCam or Skype to make a group meeting more effective. Or create a bulletin board to post late-breaking news where family can make suggestions or pitch-in.

## **Don’t overlook the support groups for caregivers.**

Just as important as the pooling to get a respite is finding groups of people who can get together to lend the support that comes from having been down that path...from presently being on the same path as you are as a caregiver.





## CCM, Inc. can be there when you can't

We are the professionals who help families who are caring for older adults (geriatric care management) or others with special needs. Our professional geriatric care managers and special needs case managers can be your eyes and ears when you simply cannot. You can count on us to help you manage both your care-giving responsibilities, and those of your family and your work that cannot be ignored...or postponed. Some of our clients refer to us as their Sister in Chicago<sup>SM</sup>.

We serve Chicago's North side and the North, Northwest and West suburbs as well as Central Illinois.

[www.creativecaremanagement.com](http://www.creativecaremanagement.com)

847-869-5118

1740 Ridge Avenue, Suite #111

Evanston, Illinois 60201