

FAMILY FIRST ALERT_{LLC}



“Taking Care of Elderly Parents”

A Guide to Taking Care of Those That Took Care of Us

By

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c November 22, 2011

Disclaimer: The information found in this book is strictly the opinion of the writer and not to be used in any way to prescribe or take the place of a medical doctor or any type of professional care giver. This information is the result of the author and his experiences with the care of his elderly mother and the experiences he has had while working with the elderly and supplying them with medical monitoring services. It is meant as a free guide to any and all that desire to read it and to share it with others that it might help.

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About the author:

Dan Taylor is the founder of “Family First Alert llc”, which is a company that supplies alert buttons and the service of monitoring those buttons for the elderly. At the time of this printing “Family First Alert llc” has been in business for twenty-five years servicing and taking care of literally hundreds of elderly people. Dan has always cared deeply for older people and wanted to do something that would help them and make a difference in their lives. Many of the people that have and are currently clients of his company have written many letters thanking Dan for the service and the quality that they receive each month. When Dan started the company, he did so because his own mother was in need of that type of service and the family had checked into different companies that offered the service but were just not completely satisfied with everything they had found. This is when Dan decided to research the industry and learn all that he could about how it worked and how it could be improved on. This was the birth of “Family First Alert llc”.

Dan not only wanted to make a quality service, but he wanted to make it affordable as well to those that needed it. This is why “Family First Alert llc” has never raised their prices from the time they started to present day. Dan boast’s the lowest price in the industry today for the same service as the many other companies and is very proud of that claim. You can follow “Family First Alert llc” on the net at www.familyfirstalert.com or on Face book as well.

Introduction:

When I was born, my mother and father were forty and forty-one years old. They were wonderful parents and they raised my brother and sister and I with much love and care. They were there for us whenever we needed them and for whatever reason. Whether it was financial support or moral support they never failed to be there for any of us. We weren’t by any means financially well off, my father owned a hardware store and my mother was a secretary for the board of education. It didn’t matter to them though, because their kids always came first and if we needed something, they would find a way to get it. I remember one time my father coming home with a flugal horn in his hand for me. I asked him where he got it and he told me that he’d traded it for an antique ax and \$50.00. He didn’t have the money to go buy a new one, but he was willing to sacrifice something that he cared about for something he cared more about, Me. He loved collecting antiques and the ax was one of his collectables. This was a common thing in our household.

I remember growing up having older parents than most all of my friends. This was a real worry for me as a kid and when they started to get older and have some health

problems my fears became a reality. I always told my mother who lived to be 86 that she would never have to worry about going into a rest home, that I would take care of her and she could always come live with me and my family. My father died at the age of 63 after having heart problems from what I feel was a result of a life of smoking two packs of cigarettes per day.

As I said before, my parents were wonderful parents and took care of us as best as any parents ever could. It's funny how things go full circle in life. Your parents take care of you and worry about you when you're young and then it's your turn to return the favor in their later years. Because of their love for me and the love and respect that I had for them, I had always felt a responsibility for them and would do whatever I could in their later years.

This article is an attempt to try to help others that are going through what my family and I did while taking care of our elderly parents. I will attempt to go through some different stages that will hopefully help ease some of the burdens that you may face. I hope you will find the following information in some way helpful.

As Time Begins to Pass, Driving Can Be a Challenge:

When our parents begin to hit those later years, it can be somewhat like walking on eggshells. You might start seeing some small things that concern you but try not to blow them out of proportion. They might be still driving their car and the thought might come to you to ask them to stop driving or you might even be so bold as to take their keys from them. This is where many children make a big mistake. Remember, it is very important for the elderly to be able to maintain self worth and dignity in their later years. Having a son or daughter tell them what to do or what not to do can really hurt their feelings and cause a lot of problems. It's easy to understand this concern if the parent has had some accidents or is not able to drive safely where they might be a risk to themselves or others on the road, but if this is not the case, respect them enough to allow them to have input into what they are wanting to do.

The Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel published a very good article online on December 26, 2012 where they outlined many good and useful tips for older drivers and their families. They stated that it's important to help older drivers to stay safe behind the wheel for as long as possible. Adult children can help aging parents regularly maintain their vehicles. And if it's time for a new car, adult children can help identify choices with new technologies that can enhance safe driving, like reverse monitoring systems. Older drivers can brush up on their driving skills with an AARP Driver Safety course, which is specifically designed to help people 50 and older refresh their driving skills.

Family members should observe an older loved one's driving by taking a ride as a passenger and keeping an eye out for warning signs. It's important to look for changes in driving abilities. These signs include:

- * Frequent "close calls" or near crashes.
- * Unexplained dents or scrapes on vehicles, fences, mailboxes, garage doors, etc.
- * Getting lost, even in familiar locations.

- * Difficulty seeing or following traffic signals, road signs and pavement markings.
- * Slower responses to unexpected situations, trouble moving the driving foot from the gas to the brake and confusing the two pedals.
- * Misjudging gaps in traffic at intersections or on highway entrance and exit ramps.
- * Experiencing road rage or inspiring it in other drivers.
- * Easily becoming distracted while driving.
- * Difficulty turning around to check the rear view while backing up or changing lanes.
- * Receiving multiple tickets or warnings from law enforcement officers.
- * If you notice a pattern of warning signs and an increase in frequency, then it's time to initiate a conversation.

"It's important that the right person initiate the conversation," says Jodi Olshevski, a gerontologist and assistant vice president at The Hartford. "Research indicates that 50 percent of married drivers prefer to hear about driving concerns from their spouses first, then doctors and finally adult children. Whoever initiates the conversation should have a strong rapport with the older driver. "

Avoid bringing up the topic of driving during family gatherings. Instead, look for a quiet, private time when all parties involved will have privacy and minimal distractions.

If the case is serious and they should not be behind the wheel, then sit down with them and discuss it in a very loving way and try hard not to talk to them in a demeaning way. Remember, they have lived along time making their own decisions and have done pretty well on their own. They deserve to have your respect as they always have. Many times, just sitting down with the elderly parent and discussing your concerns and worries and why you feel the way you do, will allow them to look at things in a different way. Remember, they loved and took care of you for a long time and they cared about how you felt and I'm sure they still do. If you truly show your love and concern for them as you speak to them, showing them respect and dignity, they might surprise you and see things more your way. Young or old, nobody likes to be told what they are going to do. Often, if your concerns are put to them as "What do you think about this mom", or "Dad, don't you think it would be better if we did this", they might be more accepting of the suggestion and not be as defensive.

If the situation is serious and they will not listen after all you have done, it might require a more drastic approach. I feel, that it's very important to hold the relationship between our parents, as most important. Having said that, you may not agree with the following tactic, but it may very well solve the problem. If I knew that my mother was dangerous on the road and that her well being and the well being of many other innocent people were at risk, I might be so inclined to contact a police officer friend or just talk to one about your concerns. I might explain to the officer that I feel that my mother could be a danger on the road to others and would he be willing to keep an eye out for her and see what he thinks. This is more easily done in smaller towns and communities, but if you have that luxury, it might be worth your while. I'm not an advocate for telling you to be dishonest to your parent or sneaky, but we are talking about their well being here. Sometimes the less you say can be the best, if you know what I mean. If the officer feels that she is unsafe in her ability to continue to drive, then he can take the needed steps on

his end. This will accomplish the goal of her safety and also help you save face in her eyes as well.

I do feel that you must be prepared to take up the slack in the event they voluntarily retire the keys or if they are taken by other means. If they lose their ability to move around that they have enjoyed for many years, this is going to be a life-changing event. As their offspring, we'll need to be sensitive to this and be willing to make arrangements for them or be willing to transport them ourselves. Depending on the number of siblings we have and the availability of each, we can have a family meeting and work out who could be responsible for what week or what day or what church meeting or what ladies or men's organization we would be able to drive them to. I would suggest that the parent not be in attendance at this meeting. I remember times when my own family meetings were taking place and my mother was sitting there. Every once in a while, there would be a conflict amongst the siblings about who could or couldn't do what and my mother would just get frustrated and speak up and say, "Just forget it, I don't need it", or something like that.

These types of situations can really hurt the parent in so many ways. Most of all it makes them feel as though they are burdensome and can start them on a path of depression. Depression is a whole other issue that we will deal with later, but it is very serious. We never want our loved ones feeling in anyway that they are a burden. I always tried my best to let my mother and father know how much I enjoyed being there for them. I'm not saying that every moment was a vacation, but for the most part, I did enjoy being there for them and seeing the gratitude in their eyes. The parent doesn't need to attend the meeting anyway to solve logistical issues of who is going to transport and when, or who is going to stay and what night. The parent doesn't need to be in on who will be taking care of getting the medicines ready each week. They just need to know that they don't have to worry about it. The less they worry, the better off they are. Bottom line is, work around them and make their life easier.

Business Affairs and The Elderly:

There are many things to think about when it comes to taking care of business concerns. Taking charge of making sure the parent's bills are taken care of is a huge worry off their minds. It's important to know where all the legal documents are and just what there is to take care of. Make a list of all bills that need to be taken care of and the addresses to where the payments need to be sent. Check to see if there's any balance on any of the accounts. Find out if there are any extra bills that are not utility type bills such as, monthly donations or Christmas club dues, or maybe they are sponsoring an over seas child each month. Evaluate at this time, (with the parent) if the budget can continue to fund these things.

In today's world, the task of taking care of the monthly bills is getting easier everyday, with the use of the internet. By going online, most bills can be paid on a monthly basis now with very little effort. This will most likely have to be set up for them being as though most elderly people are not internet savvy. I would also recommend (if possible, in your area) to have your parent's utilities put on a budget with utility companies. This will allow them to make easier payments and free up some of their capitol for other uses.

Bills that are not reoccurring, like groceries, getting their hair cut or that weekly massage, will have to be taken care of the old fashion way, just do it for them. When it's time to get groceries, go for them or have someone go, or if they feel they want to go, go with them. This is another example of allowing them to hold onto their dignity longer. Tell them, you love going to the store with them and ask them not to take that pleasure away from you. This gives them another example of your love for them and also allows them to get the help they need with getting the groceries.

It may be a smart business move to put any large assets such as vehicles or the family home place and property into the names of all the children. It would probably be a smart move to talk to a lawyer that deals with estate planning who also offers Medicaid planning services in case you parent might need government assistance with in the next three years. Often, if a parent has to go to a rest home facility and they have much in the way of assets, they might find themselves in a bad financial spot, which could affect their forfeiting their property. Transferring assets may also put those that are receiving such property, eligible for being taxed on it. These are important things to think about and should be discussed with a qualified lawyer.

Someone will have to agree to take on the position of power of attorney. If there's only one child involved the decision is easy, but if there are more it can become a little bit troublesome. If your parent has already decided which child this duty will fall to, do them a favor and respect those wishes. This is something that is probably going to be worrisome to them anyway. They will most likely worry that they may be hurting someone's feelings. Do all that you can do to let them know that you support what they have decided. It can be a lot of work being the person with power of attorney or the executor of the will. This person has to be willing to do the paperwork and the research of assets if it is unknown. This person also bears the burden of making the final decision on most all the legal decisions to be made. If you're not the one chosen in the family to do this job, please be patient with the one that is and show them your support. Usually, it is customary that the person doing this job is compensated by at least \$5000.00 for taking it on. This should not be a source of contention between siblings because the job will require much work to do it right. My sister did it for our family and did it very well. She is the one that found the extra money that we (and our mother) didn't know she had. She spent many hours on the job and did it graciously. She didn't take a penny extra for it and that was an honorable thing to do, if you're so inclined to do so. It is also recommended that once the power of attorney has been decided on, to also have detailed in a document that names a second person who will take a look at all the bank statements on a monthly basis and do an analysis of all the financial records yearly. This person can be another family member or a professional accountant.

It's also important to try to find extra money for a later time. Using financial tools such as reverse mortgage can improve the cash flow of the elderly.

Checking for benefits that your parents might be eligible for such as a reduction in their heating bills or help with their prescription drugs can really make a difference. There are many avenues to get help out there but actually only about half the people who qualify for such help actually use it.

When making purchasing or financial decisions on behave of your parent, it is also wise to consult with other siblings if there are any. Don't make the mistake of making an important, or even a not so important decision without consulting the family

involved. This will only open your self up to problems down the road. Someone will always have a different way to have handled it and will tell you about it. When you are in charge of the bills and the worries that come with it, the last thing you want to hear from a sibling is that you didn't do it the right way or that your decision wasn't done fairly. Look ahead and prepare in advance. Even the closes families have issues over money. Don't be so naive as to think that yours will not. When you have done all that you can do to make the decision and the family can't seem to come to an agreement on something, then it is your job as the executor or power of attorney to make that decision and everyone should support that decision, even if they don't agree to it. The only other thing you can do is agree on (with the parent) another, non-bias person, sort of a mediator, to make any decisions that are in a dead lock. This way no family member can be upset with any other family member. All these issues need to be understood and worked out well in advance so that there's no questions or misgivings later. It wouldn't even be a bad idea for all family members to sign an agreement stating that they understand the way that procedures will go forth and they'll abide by them.

Of course, if the parent is still healthy and able to make clear decisions, they're the ones that should set forth the procedures and how things are to be handled. They should be the one having everyone else do the signing of understanding. They will feel better about it, and, in the end, there shouldn't be any arguments, especially if everyone involved wants to honor that parent.

Assets:

It's important to make sure the family knows just what the assets are. Before my mother passed, she was very worried that there wouldn't be enough money to take care of everything. We were concerned that we wouldn't have enough money to pay off her bills and pay for her arrangements. This was something my mother should never have spent anytime worrying over, but she did. After her death, my sister was going through some of her documents and found that she actually had much more money than she herself was even aware of. My father had investments in stocks and bonds that she didn't even know about. My brother and sister and I ended up with much more inheritance than she ever knew. It saddened us all to think our mother worried so over this and didn't have the peace of mind of knowing everything was going to be ok. If there had been some way that she could have known this before, if we would have just taken the time to find out before hand. Worry is hard on the elderly and knowing that she did so was and still is upsetting. Find out what there is and what will be needed. Plan ahead for that time when you will need to know.

Financial Help:

Many Elderly are living on a very fixed income and can't afford much in the way of extras. They must budget their income very carefully and some struggle to the point that they give up many things they really need. If your parent is in a similar situation and

you or another family member aren't in a position to help much, all is not lost. There are many programs available that are there for you and your loved one.

Arrangements should be made early on for those times down the road where your parent will most likely need some sort of services to help them get by. These types of services will most likely be that of some type of in-home care such as health care, or some other type of service. These types of services usually can run upwards of 19 dollars an hour. For many elderly folks this can add up to draining their nest egg pretty quickly. Plan far enough ahead that this situation will not come as a major shock to both their finances and their emotional wellbeing.

Sometimes talking to your parents about their finances and their future can be a difficult thing to do, but it's very important before they are faced with it. Many elderly folks are living under an illusion of how much it will take for them to live after their retirement. Many have thought the number would be around 50K and in reality, that number has jumped to as high as 250K when you consider medications and health related issues that can occur. What used to be the norm has drastically changed over the recent years with technology assisting people and allowing them to live longer lives, not to mention the inflation that affects us all in today's world.

Preparing your parents for this transition can be a daunting task and very uncomfortable. I would suggest the following. Decide on a nice comfortable place to sit down with them one on one. This would be a place where you know they're at ease and comfortable to talk. A backyard swing, or a nice bench in the park would be ideal, or you may have that special place already in mind. I would advise you to not go to a restaurant to have this discussion as your parents will most likely not feel comfortable in a public area where they might think their business was being overheard. Once you've found that place and you're ready to start the conversation, I would lead into it very carefully and with caution to their feelings at all times. I would suggest asking your parents about their goals and how they see their financial future unfolding. You could even approach it as asking for their advice for your own future and what they think you should do. During this time, you could then simply ask them what they have done in their lives to prepare for their future. This most likely will enlighten you to their situation and how you can best help them.

The local Social Services organization is a wonderful resource that should be tapped into. This organization has government funded grants and monies to help. If you contact them and explain your situation with them, very often they will be able to help in some way. Another fine organization is the Area on Aging services and the Community Action group that also can be of great help. They have monies allocated from the government for helping the elderly. Local branches of the American Red Cross provide Americans with help paying electric and heating bills.

Often these particular organizations are given a certain budget that they have to last for a certain quarter or even on a yearly basis, therefore, it is important to contact them as soon as possible to be able to receive such funds. These two organizations would definitely be a good place to start when looking for some assistance.

Many utility companies across the country offer support and assistance to Americans to help them pay their electric bills. Sometimes the utility companies will outsource the administration of the program to the United Way. By contacting the local

United Way office, you can see if they are aware of any assistance or support provided by any of the utility providers.

The **Cancer Care Co-Payment Assistance Foundation** is a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance and cash grants to people who need assistance with paying hospital and medical bills that result from a cancer diagnosis.

There are several programs that offer discounted and free prescription medications. They include Dispensary of Hope, Together RX Access, NeedyMeds, and the Patient Advocate Foundation.

The Medications:

I would first recommend that whoever is in charge of getting the medications ready, get a weekly pill container to put them in. They even have these for the whole month if you want to do it that far in advance. This helps you organize the pills and keep track of them more efficiently. If the parent is still seeing that they take the pills each day, these little containers also help them not to take their meds twice, thinking that they might not have. If the pills are gone, they know they have and if the pills are still in the container by evening, they know they forgot to take their medications and can still do so. The responsibility of taking care of the parent's medications can be very nerve racking, at least for me it was. Even when using a pill container, it can still be a difficult task. I think there was only a few times that I didn't make a mistake while getting them ready for the week. I recommend after all the pills are in the container, that you take the extra time and go back and check each container for the correct dosage. It's better to be safe than sorry, as they say.

I remember when I was doing this job for my mother and it proved to be a very nerve-racking job for me each week.

It's also very important that you stay up on refills so that you don't get caught without a medication during a weekend or a holiday when it might be difficult to get one. The pill containers seem to help with this as well, because you can see just when you're getting low and when you need a refill.

Do yourself and your parent a very valuable favor by doing some of your own research on the medications that they are on. Don't always trust the doctors, they see thousands of patients during the week and may not be taking the time to always look and see if something they are prescribing is going to conflict with something else that they are on. This has happened more times than any doctor would like to admit. My own mother was on sixteen pills a day towards the end of her life and at one time wasn't making a lot of sense with her words. At first, we thought she was just going down hill health wise and that maybe she was getting Alzheimer's or something worse. She got to the point that she had to be put on Hospice care and was taken off most of the medications and miraculously regained her clear thinking within just a few short days. This led to her being taken off Hospice care altogether. This was an eye opener to my family that many of the elderly are over medicated in today's society. "Sometimes, less is more", is really true.

Any quick search on the internet these days can tell you what any drug's side effects are. In many instances you might even be able to find out what drugs shouldn't be

taken with certain other drugs. It's just good to be educated on what is going on because no one is going to care as much for your loved one as you are.

If you haven't already done so, I recommend you make a very clear typed page that shows all the medications that your parent is on and how often they take each one. I would make several copies of this document for family members to have. It's a great idea to place one of them on the refrigerator, so that if an ambulance is ever dispatched to the home, it is in plain site for them to take it with them when transporting. This will alleviate much confusion on the way to the hospital and even after they arrive. Listed on this paper along with the medications that they are taking, it is important to list any allergies or specific problems that you would want the ambulance crew to know about. The hospital will thank you as well, because they will have to know this information once your parent arrives and is diagnosed. Many medications can cause the patient to be less alert and therefore more prone to falls. Some of these medications can be sedatives, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic drugs. People that are taking multiple medications are at greater risk of falling.

Know the side effects of all the medications that you are taking. Most pharmacists these days include a brochure with the side effects for you to read when dispersing the medications.

Fall Prevention and The Home:

The most common reason for injuries to the elderly are due to falls. Falls account for 70% of the cause of accidental deaths in America for elderly persons seventy-five years and older. More than 90% of hip fractures occur because of falls. One third of community-dwelling elderly and 60% of nursing home residents will fall each year. There are many reasons that an elderly person will take a fall and because of their age it can be a devastating experience. In some instances, a fall can even result in death. I remember once staying with my mother for the evening and she got up to go to the kitchen and the next thing I heard was a terrifying crashing sound. I jumped up and ran to the kitchen with fear in my heart and found my mother on the floor. It really scared me, but luckily, she was not hurt too badly, except for a few scrapes here and there. As I helped her up, I felt guilty for not jumping up as soon as I saw her going to the kitchen. The thought that I could have moved faster and gotten whatever it was that she was wanting and prevented her fall was all I could think of. Then I realized if I had not been there at all, she might have been confined to the floor for several hours. Not that this eased my mind that much, but it did open my awareness to how quickly something like that can happen. I felt blessed that she had not gotten hurt any worse. There are many things to consider when making a home Elderly proof. Just like making a home child proof, there are things that need to be done for the elderly. One of the biggest issues that the elderly have is that they have a high risk of falling. You can alleviate some of this worry by making sure the following is taken care of.

Is the home setup in a safe way for the family member? Are there things that can be done to the home to ensure that it's a safe environment? It's a good idea to include anti scald devices for showers and faucets that protect older skin. The skin of an elderly person can sustain serious burns much easier than a youthful person. Take the time to set the water heater to the "low" setting or at 120 degrees. My mother was having trouble

getting in and out of her bathtub and we were afraid that she might take a bad fall in doing so. We decided to tear out the old tub and install a walk-in shower unit. This way she could just step into it and sit on her shower seat. We found out later that this was a very smart move because of the fact that several weeks later, her sugar level dropped which caused her to pass out and laid in the shower for over three and a half hours with the water still running on her. If she would have still had her tub, she might have drowned. Many elderly folks over the age of 65, experience a fall each year. Most of the time these falls occur right in their own home while doing the things they have done for many years.

Here are some quick things to think about that I have come across in trying to help prevent a loved one from a serious fall.

- * Make sure all rugs are secure.
- * Get rid of any throw rugs that are present.
- * Do away with any slippery surfaces that might be a hazard to walk on.
- * If the loved one is bound to a wheelchair or uses a walker, or any other walking aid, make sure the pathway is clear enough for them to pass through without being a fall hazard.
- * It's sometimes a good idea to install handrails on both sides of the steps for better support. Many have even installed handrails in hallways to help prevent falls.
- * Make sure appliance cords are out of the way. Especially telephone cords and electrical cords.
- * Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around it.
- * Make sure furniture is easy to get in and out of. In some cases, purchasing a lift chair might be required. I would recommend shopping around when looking for these because there can be pretty big differences in price and quality.
- * Remove caster wheels from furniture.
- * Use a television remote control and a cordless phone.
- * Avoid using floor polish or wax in order to reduce slick surfaces.
- * Keep commonly used items within easy reach.
- * A higher toilet seat can be very helpful to the parent as well. These help by allowing the parent to sit up higher and makes it much easier to get up from.
- * Put in a bedside light with a switch that is easy to turn on and off or a by a touch lamp.
- * Locate a telephone within the reach of the bed.
- * Adjust the height of the bed to make it easy to get in and out of.
- * Have a firm chair, with arms, to sit and dress in.
- * Install night lights where walking will be required.

- * Keep things off the floor that would create a hazard for walking at night to the bathroom.
- * As mentioned before, a tub seat is a very safe way for the parent to take a shower. These can be picked up in pharmacies or medical supply stores.
- * Add a nonskid mat to the bathtub.
- * Mounting a liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub wall will help prevent falls from trying to pick up fallen bars of soap.
- * Install a portable, hand-held showerhead.

Physical Activity is very important:

Up to 75% of elderly folks are not getting enough exercise in their lives. Regular exercise has so many health benefits in older adults when it comes to blood pressure, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, lipid profile, and neurocognitive function. Improvements in cardiovascular, metabolic, endocrine, and psychologic health are well documented. Regular exercise has proven to help improve the quality of sleep, cognitive function and even helps with depression and short-term memory. Probably the biggest effect that exercise has on the elderly is, they gain much in the way of mobility and independence. Body weight is decreased while strength is increased. Exercise has proven to really help with sore and stiff joints as well. Just some basic walking around more often can show significant results. If possible, water aerobics can be a fantastic way for the elderly to get exercise. This type of exercise is not weight bearing and removes stress from the joints while maintaining good muscle strengthening. Maintaining good exercising can also help in the prevention of common chronic diseases that often occur.

Regular exercise for just 15 minutes can really help with developing good muscle tone, strength, and also preventing the loss of bone mass and flexibility. It's important when doing daily activities that an elderly person thinks strongly about safety in what they do, for example, bending properly and giving yourself enough time to get your balance. When getting up from a chair or the bed, be aware of your stability and give yourself time. It's very important to learn how to properly fall to prevent injury. Wearing the proper fitting shoes that have good support is crucial. Always wear shoes with low heels or rubber soles and stay away from any shoe that is slick on the bottom.

Fraud and Deception:

Many cases have been recorded where an elderly person has been taken advantage of financially. It seems like the elderly are one of the most common targeted groups for any and all types of scams out there. Many of the elderly are taken in by what seems to be legitimate organizations to help financially. Telemarketing scams claiming that the elderly person has won money and they need banking information to transfer the funds or fraudulent investments, insurance policies, travel packages or sweepstakes are among the many practices the scammers will try. Many of our loved ones have fallen for these scams over the years and the scammers can be ruthless in their attempts.

-It's very important to educate your loved ones against this rising threat - So what can we do to help prevent this from happening?

There are several things to consider.

The National Consumers League (NCL) offers a brochure online, *They Can't Hang Up* which is in English and Spanish. It describes the "red flags of fraud" and provides advice on preventing fraud and assisting victims.

NCL's National Fraud Information Center provides tips about how to identify common scams and avoid telemarketing fraud. In addition, NCL has information about identity theft, how to get off marketing lists, and how to protect your personal privacy on www.nclnet.org/privacy.

One of the biggest problems with trying to stop this activity is that the criminals are banking on the fact that most elderly people are just too polite to hang up. We need to impress upon our loved ones that it's ok to hang the phone up and walk away. This goes against their nature, but it needs to be taken seriously.

One red flag of a telemarketing scam is to ask you to buy something in order to win a prize or to increase your chances of winning something. Any behavior like this is totally illegal.

Some tactics that are used make it even harder to recognize the scams. If they're pressured to act immediately or if they refuse to send you information for further explanation, it's probably a good idea to hang up. Other tell tailed signs are if they use scare tactics or demand that you send a payment for something by wire or courier or especially by Western Union transfer.

Don't go along with anyone telling you that they need to verify your address or any other personal information. They are just trying to pump you for information that they can use against you later.

Never give out your Social Security number over the phone or any bank routing numbers or account numbers.

Don't fall for the scammer that says they have money for you in a foreign bank account and they need your information in order to transfer your funds. Many people and not just the elderly, have fallen for this scam.

Put your number on the national "do-not-call" registry to stop most telemarketing calls. Call 888-382-1222, TTY 866-290-4326 or go to www.donotcall.gov. You can also tell companies not to call you again on a case-by-case basis. Report violations of your "do-not-call" rights through the "do-not-call" number or Web site. Report telemarketing fraud to the NFIC at 800-876-7060, www.fraud.org.

There are many scammers around every turn in life. I remember one time taking my family to the beach for vacation. One night we were eating out and having a really nice evening. When it came time to pay our bill the waiter came to the table and took the bill and my debit card to the back of the restaurant to check me out. He was gone for an extended period of time and I just thought he was busy with so many customers. About 2 weeks after the vacation was over and we were home, I found out that my card had been tried at an ATM. This attempt was not successful, so the criminal used my numbers to wire money via Western Union. My account was missing \$500.00. Luckily for me, Western Union covered my loss, but I don't think the waiter was ever prosecuted. I submitted a police report and checked back often on the progress, but since the offender was from out of the United States, they said there was little that could be done.

For the elderly the bottom line is, if it doesn't feel right, don't listen. Walk away, throw it away, or hang up the phone and don't give it another thought. Like the old saying says, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Identifying and Treating Elderly Depression:

It's hard enough watching our loved ones move through life and age with illness and all that comes with that process naturally, but to see them in a depressive state of mind is even more challenging. The aging process can be cruel with all the aches and pains that can and will occur. It's one thing to have discomforts and still have a good outlook, but when depression rears its ugly head to one of our loved ones it can be debilitating.

In some cases, depression can be the cause of even shortening an elderly person's life. Clinical depression in the elderly seems to be a common thing these days and sadly, only about 10% get the treatment they need. Many of us feel depressed at least a few times during our lives but when the elderly person feels it, it's usually a long side many other things that produce some type of pain or discomfort.

Depression in the elderly is often not caught for a very long time because so many things are going on with their health anyway and people tend to think that the more sleeping and the quietness is expected as a part of the aging process. This is the main reason many of the elderly don't get the treatment they need.

Elderly depression can be a very serious thing that can harm the heart and the ability of the older body to overcome illness. This is why a good evaluation and correct treatment is so important.

Suicide in elderly people and especially white men is more than doubled from the general population. The National Institute of Mental Health considers depression over the age of 65 to be a major health problem.

Insomnia almost always is apparent during depression and "hypnotic" drugs that are safe and effective are recommended for counteracting it.

The elderly people that tend to be at risk are those that are female or those that are single or divorced or widowed. Elderly people without others in their lives for support, find it very difficult to deal with depression and stress is also a major factor. Other things like diabetes and other illnesses can also contribute to depression as well. Even certain medications or their combinations can be contributors. Living with constant physical pain can lead anyone to be in a state of depression, but it seems to hit the elderly even harder. Depression after a surgical procedure has been known to take place with elderly people. To them, it's just another problem to add to an already long list of problems and frankly they sometimes just get to the point where they say enough is enough.

Recent deaths in the family especially that of a spouse or a child can be devastating. These types of losses can sometimes be more than an elderly person can bear if they don't get the help that is needed. Other factors in the elderly can even be chemical changes in the cells of the brain or a lack of adequate blood flow.

What can we do to help our loved ones during this difficult time? There are actually several things that can be done to alleviate much of this sadness to help bring the quality of life back to our loved one. There are medications that can be prescribed to help

in certain situations or counseling is a very good option as well, though sometimes it can be very difficult to acquire acceptance from the elderly for this, it is well worth the effort. In many cases, help could be accomplished by some regular visits from an old friend or a pastor that they have a lot of respect for, or even a spiritual message on depression that could be watched on television or DVD.

Psychotherapy or electroconvulsive therapy can also be an option as well. It's very important to discuss these options with a good doctor that is familiar with the loved one and their medical history.

Antidepressants can be very helpful, but they need to be used carefully so that the parent's blood pressure doesn't fall too quickly and create even more problems. Elderly people are more sensitive to medications, so care needs to be taken with regards to the reaction with other medications they may be on and how they will react to them.

Our loved ones have been there for us for so many years and we care deeply about them. We want the late years of their lives to be as happy as the younger years were. When they are sad, we are sad. We worry about them and what will happen to them. This worrying can even lead to our own problems if we let it and the vicious cycle continues.

One of the best ways for an elderly person to escape depression is to serve others. If the elderly person is in good enough health, they could do volunteer work at hospitals, public schools or the local library. Much gratification can be had for helping others and seeing the worth that you are.

Finding out if your loved one is experiencing depression is very important and then finding the appropriate treatment is just as important. Letting them know that we love them and care about them is also very important and can go a long way in helping them overcome these challenges. Life, (the entire life) is meant to be enjoyed and to experience happiness as much as we can. If you feel that your loved one might be experiencing some depression, act now and don't wait. Get them the help they need and allow happiness to once again fill their hearts.

Sleep Problems:

Many elderly parents suffer from not getting a restful night of sleep. Many different reasons can cause sleep problems from Restless Leg Syndrome, to Sleep Apnea, problems with medications, or a host of many other things. Without getting into the many things that can cause lack of sleep issues, let's focus on some things that may help. It is very important that the elderly person still tries to lead an active life during the day. Encourage them to spend as little of time in bed during the day as they can. Get as much exercise as possible while still taking care of any health issues that they may have.

Keep a steady routine that is followed closely. Don't stay up real late one night and go to bed early the next. Stay consistent with a schedule. It's sort of like a baby's schedule, when a person is on one, they tend to be less fussy and much happier.

Avoid the use of caffeine, alcohol and nicotine in the afternoon and evening hours. In fact, I would go as far as to say, "Don't ever use them". These products can really put a damper on a good night's sleep, not to mention they're not good for the human body, no matter how old you are.

It's important to have good sleep habits and the elderly need to receive at least a half hour to an hour of exposure to bright light each day. This and exercise together reinforce the circadian cycle, which is essential to sleep. Minimize the amount of sunlight coming into the bedroom in the mornings will also help. Don't spend too much time in bed trying to go to sleep. Get up and move around a little or watch some television from your favorite chair. Continuing to stay in bed and trying to fall asleep can sometimes reinforce the problem just because you're thinking too much about it.

I would also search for help on this subject from various national organizations like the American Sleep Disorders Association. They can be found on the net at <http://www.asda.org> or the National Sleep Foundation at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org>. These organizations have a wealth of information to help those struggling with this problem.

Constipation and The Elderly:

This is a subject that hurts anyone just to think about it, but with the elderly, it can be a very serious problem. About 26 percent of elderly men and 34 percent of elderly women are affected by constipation. This problem is one that many people will look at as being a quality of life killer. It may be due to a mass lesion or hypothyroidism or just simply the side effect of medications.

Constipation can be the cause of other such problems such as hemorrhoids, which can be very painful in and of itself.

One thing that should be avoided is the continual use of laxatives. Once the problem is in remission and the person is feeling better, it is sometimes good to slowly start on a higher intake of fiber and fluid intake. Exercise is also very important in helping constipation. Stool softeners can really help when taken under a doctor's supervision.

Diet can also play a huge roll in bowel health, especially in the elderly. The low-fiber diet that most American's are guilty of not following and the fact that we don't take in enough fluids has been said to account for the large number of older adults who complain of constipation. Sometimes just adding a commercial over the counter product such as Metamucil can make a world of difference.

When in doubt and with problems persisting over a longer period of time, a doctor's recommendation should be sought.

Elder Abuse:

This is a subject that I personally have strong feelings about. I love the elderly and the thought of someone or some organization abusing them is despicable.

Abuse can come from many different avenues. It can come from health care workers that come into the home, a neighbor, or from anyone that wants to take advantage of them. If your loved one is in a facility full time being taken care of such as

a rest home or elderly living community and you suspect abuse, don't wait, put on your detective hat and go to work.

There are different forms of abuse. There is physical abuse, which can often be easier to spot and then there is emotional abuse like intimidation tactics through the use of yelling, ridicule and ignoring. Sexual abuse has also been a sad form of abuse against the elderly. I can't imagine where I might be today, if I would have suspected any of my family members of having been the victim of such evilness.

Charging insurance companies for healthcare but not providing that care is another form of abuse. This is not only abuse of the elderly person, but for our healthcare system in general. Over charging or double billing for medical care or services or overmedicating or under medicating a person is abusive practices as well.

There are less harmful ways, yet still abusive tactics that an elderly person can be abused by. I once had a potential client with my business "Family First Alert llc" that called me wanting to take my service. The call came in on a Thursday and I was to install our unit on the following Saturday. Friday afternoon I got a call from the client saying that she couldn't have me install for her because the other national company that she had service with was threatening her that they would ruin her credit if she broke her contract and went else where to get the service. This to me is abuse of our elderly. They should have the right to save themselves money, especially when so many of them are on such a low fixed income.

Noticing abuse may not be that easy at first. Signs of elder abuse might be catalogued by what we think is dementia or signs of the elderly person's frailty. It's not hard for a poor caregiver to make sensible excuses for what really is abuse. Never dismiss what you may think is abuse, just because the caregiver might put their spin on it. Remember, criminals don't admit to being criminals and abuse is criminal.

Watch for any changes in personality or behavior in the elderly person. Watch for any signs of injury or bruises, welts, or scars. Watch for left over medications that didn't get used, broken glasses or signs of the elderly having been restrained. Never agree to the caregiver's refusal to allow you to see your elderly person alone.

Any time you witness threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver treatment these should be warning signs. Notice if your elderly person is mimicking behavior that is sometimes characteristic of dementia. These could be signs like rocking, sucking or mumbling to oneself of abuse instead.

Unusual weight loss, unsanitary living conditions, person being dirty or having bedsores is also a red flag.

If you suspect in the least way that your elderly family member is being in anyway abused, REPORT IT! There is no excuse for not doing something about it, if you suspect it. Don't wait to see if the symptoms or signs go away. Even if you are totally wrong and are proven false, at least you've done what you could for your loved one. If you suspect a healthcare facility of abuse, seek a lawyer's advice but get your loved one out of that facility immediately! Discuss the situation with your doctor but don't stop your investigation if he doesn't seem to be alarmed. Remember, he may have a vested interest. He may feel he is in some way liable for that lack of care and won't want you to pursue it. If he's a caring doctor, he'll investigate the situation and do whatever he can for your parent or loved one.

When reporting suspected Elder Abuse, remember these are crimes and should be dealt with accordingly. You can report these crimes and suspicions to your states Elder Abuse Helpline, or by contacting your local Social Services Agency. Do not stop at that point though, these organizations usually have a full plate and can sometimes be taxed so heavily that things might not move along as quickly as they should. If all else fails, take matters into your own hands and find other options for care.

Lastly on this subject, if you are not in a position to help an elderly person, maybe you can volunteer or donate money to the educating of elder abuse. You could also lobby to strengthen state laws and policing this terrible crime. Help this crime to be prosecuted more readily and who knows, the life you help today, might be your own tomorrow.

Alzheimer's and Dementia:

Anyone who has ever experienced a loved one suffering through this devil, knows how devastating it can be. It not only affects the person who has the problem, but in many cases, it seems as though the family around them take an even harder hit.

Alzheimer's is the worst and most progressive form of Dementia. Symptoms usually develop slowly but can get much worse over time eventually interfering with the person's ability to do normal everyday things.

Alzheimer's is not a normal part of the aging process and currently there is no cure for it. Just because you may be experiencing some memory loss does not necessarily mean that you have Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is a disease that mostly affects those after the age of 65 but has been known to attack in the 40's and 50's to. Alzheimer's is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.

I remember once when I was in my early twenties, I was swimming in my parent's swimming pool in the back yard and I looked up to see an elderly friend standing there. He was my neighbor's grandfather who from all I knew was still in good health. I hadn't seen him for a few years, but he was always healthy and in excellent shape, being as though he had boxed professionally in his prime. I looked up at him and welcomed him into the yard, but he just didn't seem himself. He proceeded to ask me where my father was which was a definite red flag for me, since my father had passed about 10 years ago at the time. I stated to him that he wasn't around anymore. He got a puzzled look on his face and walked out of the gate. I pondered over this for a while and came to the conclusion that something must be wrong, so I got out of the pool and into my car to try to find him. As I drove down the street, I noticed him walking on the sidewalk I pulled up beside of him and asked him if he would like a ride home and luckily, he accepted my offer and I took him home.

Later I found out from his grandson that he was in the late stages of Alzheimer's and was doing a lot of wondering. It was good that I acted when I did because he may or may not have found his way home.

The treatment for Alzheimer's and Dementia is making great strides today. Most of the learning of this illness has taken place in just the last 15 years. There is very good data coming in showing good results for the treatment of these illnesses. At the time of this writing, scientists are working on a nasal spray that can be administered to Alzheimer's patients. Results in labs with mice have proven very promising.

Recently I watched several YouTube videos of patients with Alzheimer's showing some remarkable strides just from listening to the music that they loved in their early years. While listening to this music they lost the stare in their eyes and came to life like they hadn't done in sometimes years. There is something in the way the brain reacts to music and in how it can have a direct path to lost memories. I know being a musician and composer myself, just how much music is a part of my life and I believe we have only scratched the service of what music can do for the Alzheimer patient. Most recently I saw a video of a man who had been a composer in his early years, but now was racked with this terrible disease and had become almost unreachable. Apparently, the care center that he lived in had just purchased a nice piano for the center and when he saw it, he walked over to it, sat down and began to play one of his compositions from his early life. He played it flawlessly and trust me, it wasn't just a two-finger piece, it was quite extensive in its composition. Many fast runs up and down the keyboard and many chord progressions that would have taken some great thought processes to play. He played it as if he was twenty years old again and had the sweetest smile on his face by the end. Music is powerful my friends and I believe being able to tap into its power can help our loved ones.

Try a little experiment if you would. Find a list of musical pieces that was popular during your parent's youth and assemble a place list for them. Turn that place list on and just let it play for an hour and then go in and visit with them. Who knows, you might see a major difference in their attention level, and you might even witness that twinkle in their eye again. After all, you're not out anything for trying and who knows you might come to appreciate some of the music that was popular during their time. This is a terrible disease and I say, if there is any indication that music can aid in its recovery or even it's slow down, let's try it.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or a form of Dementia, you are not alone. The Alzheimer's Association is the trusted resource for reliable information, education, referral and support to millions of people affected by this disease. You can call their 24-hour help line anytime at 800-272-3900.

Anger Issues And Resentment:

So, this is not a fun topic to get into and you may be wondering if it's going to be about the patient or the caregiver, right? Well, to be honest with you, both apply in this case and you can even slide in other family members there too. All sides of that spectrum can have serious anger issues and resentment toward the other and can be the catalyst that ruins relationships and brings on guilt that will affect the rest of a person's life if not dealt with swiftly.

This was never an issue with my own mother and I, but it was with my siblings at times as we didn't always see eye to eye on how to deal with our dear mother. I remember one time in particular when my mother called me up and asked me if I could take her to the store and normally I would have just thought nothing of it and would have headed out to pick her up, but in this case I was home without a car as my wife was using it. I asked my mother why she couldn't use her own car and she proceeded to tell me that my older brother of sixteen years had taken it to use it and that he was watching a movie and didn't want to bring it back to her until it was over. This frustrated me as I didn't have any way to help her, so I called him and ended up getting into an argument about it.

My brother and I had these arguments quite often especially about the care I thought he should be giving her and the care he thought I should be giving her. The biggest issue here was not that mom didn't have transportation, it was that she had just gotten out of the hospital and wasn't in any shape to walk the almost mile, to get her car and on top of that, it was raining a cold rain that day. Normally I would never have thought that she would even consider that, but she had also gotten frustrated by this point and told me that she would just walk and go get it herself. This was the cause of most of my worry, as I didn't want her to have to do that and I worried about her welfare in doing so. I told her to wait while I took care of the problem and I promptly got on a bicycle to ride to my brother's house in the rain in order to pick her car up for her. Needless to say, when I got there cold and wet, I wasn't in the best of moods and my elder brother took the brunt of that. When I knocked on my brother's door to get the keys our argument again, resumed and he ended up in the bushes and I got my mother's car back for her. Of course, this led to unnecessary hard feelings within the family for months and no one actually won, because my mother ended up getting upset with both my brother and I for arguing again.

So, what happens when the problem is between you, as the caregiver and the parent. This makes things so much harder on both parties. I didn't see this side of the story until just recently when my wife and family and I had to move clear across the county to the state of Utah in order to help her mother try to recover from having nine strokes. You might ask, why that should be such a problem. Well, you see my mother in law and father in law of thirty-four years have never liked me, because I married their daughter and moved her to the east where my teaching profession was. When we moved our family out, we were under the impression that everything we did in behave of my wife's parents, would be greatly appreciated by them and her four brothers. Boy! We were wrong! Her father was just as self-caring as he had always been and really made it clear that he didn't need us there and wouldn't even allow me to live there in order to help them, so we had to rent of place to stay. There was no pleasing him and it became apparent to me very quickly, that all he really wanted to do was argue and find fault with anything we did and especially me. This made it extremely hard to have compassion for them and to want to help them, but we did it anyway. It wasn't until my wife's mother had gotten to the point that she couldn't do anything for herself and she was bed ridden, that a little bit of "thankyou", started to service. I became the sole provider when it came to, lifting her from the bed to the chair, to the car and to the doctor's appointments. It wasn't easy doing this for someone that had caused me so much grief for so long. I remember once while lifting her and she had her arms around my neck to hold on, that she said, "I bet you're getting tired of doing this". I quickly told her that it was my honor to help her and to never think that way again. I saw a change starting to come over her, not that it was a huge change by any means, but at least I was seeing something. We helped her for over a year until the time of her passing and at the time of this writing, my wife still continues to this day to help her dad get around.

Laura Ellen Christian, the Vice President of engagement at the Arbor Company gives us fifteen expert tips on when your aging parents won't listen.

1. Be Persistent

Don't set yourself up with the expectation that everything should be resolved in one sitting. You will probably have to bring up your concerns to your parent's countless times -- so be patient.

2. Avoid Power Struggles

Don't push, nag or harangue your parents. Making ultimatums will only get their backs up, and yelling, arguing or slamming doors could seriously damage the relationship.

3. Be Sensitive

Criticism and judgement can also put your parents on the defensive. Bluntly telling Mom and Dad they don't know how to manage their own lives will not win them over. Instead, keep to "I" statements, like: "I'm feeling concerned because you look like you're losing weight and I'm worried that you're not eating enough."

4. Know That Timing is Everything

Make sure you choose to have challenging conversations on days when your parents are feeling relaxed rather than depressed or anxious. That goes for you to -- delay talking if you feel particularly stressed as your anxiety will only add to their fear.

5. Stay calm

On some level your parents may be very aware they are losing function, so avoiding the talking about their future might seem safer to them than admitting reality. Stating your concerns calmly and speaking with love and tenderness can help reassure them that a change will be okay.

6. Seek Outside Help -- for Yourself

Of course, being serene and soothing may not come easily if you feel frightened, helpless and frustrated yourself. If this is the case,

please divert some of your caregiving energy to yourself and get some outside support, be it a meditation group, a counsellor, or a support group.

7. Spend More Time With Them

Although you may not have scads of time on their hands, try spending a little more of it with your parents (that is, if the relationship is not conflictual). As your mother and father grow frailer, they will likely appreciate a little more attention. Your interactions might even become more harmonious if they know you are prioritizing the relationship instead of squeezing it into a hectic schedule.

8. Ask Questions

Instead of talking at your parents, it's more to ask open-ended questions (e.g., Why don't you want cousin Mary to come in and fix your meals?). In a best-case scenario, this approach may allow them to reflect upon their situation, concluding that a change really is in order.

9. Come Up With Solutions

If you manage to gain insight into your parents' underlying concerns (say, they fear they will end up in a nursing home) then suggest a tailored solution. But don't come up with a quick fix on the fly, take the time to do your research first, for example, checking out various senior living options and then asking your parents out for lunch at one of the communities.

10. Focus on the Benefits

As well, always focus on the benefits of your proposed solution. For instance, if you see assisted living as the answer, emphasize the variety of social and recreational activities that these communities offer.

11. Bring in Other Siblings

Remember, caregiving is a large responsibility, one that you shouldn't have to do alone. If you have other siblings, ask them to talk to Mom and Dad. Just make sure that you see eye to eye on the important issues.

12. Enlist the Support of Friends

Consider setting up a family meeting that includes a close friend or neighbor. Sometimes it can be easier to hear the truth from someone outside of the family.

13. Talk to Their Doctor

If all else fails, contact your parents' doctor, letting him or her know about your concerns for your parents' well-being. In the end, a medical professional may be the one person whose advice your parents will heed.

14. Outline the Consequences

If your parents are still bound and determined to stay in their four-bedroom house or to keep on driving, calmly let them know the possible consequences of their actions.

15. Don't Count on Them Changing

In the final analysis, there may be nothing you can do to change a parent's mind. Remember, your parents are grown adults who have the right to make their own decisions, and sometimes the best you can do is let go and accept the situation.

Number fifteen is one that I've come to realize is very true. At this point in my father in law's life, I don't believe he's going to be doing any kind of life altering changes. It's just not going to happen. I think sometimes we as caregivers need to step

back and get away from the situation for at least a little while so we can readjust and refuel our souls. Make it a priority in your life to take care of you! If you don't do that, no one else is going to do it for you and it's important. Check with another family member or neighbor or government assistance program to make arrangements to get so "Me" time away from the situation. Don't feel guilty or in bad for doing so. Don't beat yourself up for taking care of you! Ever been on a plane when the stewardess has explained that if cabin pressure is lost and you have small children beside you, that you need to put your own oxygen mask on first and then take care of the child's? This is done in order to make sure the child is kept safe. If you try to put the child's mask on first and you pass out in doing so, you're not going to be able to help the child at all and your both in trouble at that point. Dealing with argumentative elderly parents is no different. If you allow yourself to be abused by them long enough, you'll get burned out and will become more frustrated as time goes on. This could even lead to you abusing them either verbally, mentally or hopefully not physically. It's very important to seek that "Me" time. Do it for yourself and in doing so you'll be doing it for your loved one as well. Find the time to go out to eat without them or to see a movie without them. Set aside at least one night or two where you can call your own. If there are no other family members that can help or not willing, then there are other options you can look into such as Community Action or Social Services groups or in many cases, talk to a pastor or a church leader about your problem. In many cases there are groups from churches or local organizations set up to help you, but you'll have to be willing to reach out to them. Don't let pride get in your way. This is your well-being we're talking about and if you don't want to think about your well-being then think of your parent's. Think of how they will be, even if they don't, if you're not able to be there for them. Remember the plane example, get your "Me" time first.

Now this brings me to the other side of the coin. How should we treat our elderly parents especially in their later years?

I just recently learned of a new word. That word is "Ageism" and it's defined as a tendency to regard older persons as debilitated and unworthy of attention. This is a term that unfortunately is becoming rampant in today's culture. This is a terrible thing to let happen because our elderly and especially our elderly parent's, have so much to offer us in the way of experiences and life lessons. They grew up in a time that we can't even imagine. They dealt with issues that in many cases, we will never see or have to. They had to live through terrible wars, the depression in some cases, the loss of other family members and so much more that they can teach us from.

I have always enjoyed talking with elderly people. I have just always felt that they had so much to offer with all their experiences. I guess in a sort of way I have always looked at them as a doorway or a time machine to the past. Wouldn't it be neat to be able to sit down with George Washington and learn about his struggles or maybe someone who was living during the time of Christ? In a way the elderly are our eyes to the past though it is a closer past it is still our past.

Spending quality time with our elderly parents can benefit us both. It's good times like these that foster the best memories that we have. Just letting them know by taking the time to really sit down and listen to them about what they have to say can do wonders for them. Having patience with our elderly parents is both emotionally and physically challenging, but it's the right thing to do. Whenever you feel that it's

becoming too much and you're at your wits end, that's when it's time for that "Me" time that was discussed earlier. Don't wait until it's too late and have your plan in place when you need it. Have a person or an organization ready to take up the slack at a moment's notice. You'll be glad you did.

Dealing With Siblings That Don't Want To Help:

Unfortunately, in some cases there are family members that are perfectly satisfied to let a brother, or a sister take all of the responsibility in caring for the parent or parents. There are those that will have every excuse in the book about why they can't help or lend a hand or pay for something to take care of the parent. It's hard for me to imagine anyone being this non caring or willing to turn their backs on their own parents in their time of need, but it happens more than most of us realize. When one son or daughter takes the lead on taking care of the parents, they often find themselves in a situation where they are being taken advantage of by their siblings because they know they can get away with it. It may seem like you are banging your head against a brick wall because when you need that help, it never seems to be convenient for anyone to step in to help. This can be a very frustrating place to be and can also led to very hard feeling within the family and also led to a fast burn out. It can also be very detrimental to the parent when they see that your siblings either won't make time for them or they just don't care enough. Every member, if possible, should be invested in the welfare of their parents that gave them life and took care of them for so many years. I understand that it's not always possible because of not being in the area or maybe because of health reasons to help as much as you would like, I get that, but if there isn't anything real reasons why a person can't lend a hand for their own parents, then they need to step up to the proverbial plate and take their turn.

When this becomes a problem and it's effecting the well-being of the parent or the main caregiver which could be you, then the problem needs to be addressed in a timely manner. I would suggest asking a close friend of the family or a pastor to take the lead in being in charge of a family meeting where all are in attendance and involved. This should be a person that everyone in the family respects and is on board with. Before this meeting takes place, it would be good for you to meet with that person to share your concerns about the situation so they're up to speed on everything before the entire family meeting. During this meeting it's important to start out with talking about the goals that everyone has for the loved one being taken care of. Is the goal to keep them in their own home or to have them move in with a son or daughter or to have them put in a rest home or care facility? I truly hope that latter is a last resort for anyone reading this book. No one really wants to live in a rest home or care facility if they don't have to and I've found that in most cases, if the family members care enough and are willing to do their part, it's not necessary. Now that doesn't mean it's going to be easy, but raising you probably wasn't easy on your parents either. It's that circle of life thing again and now it's your turn. Grasp it, take hold of it and do it with respect and love.

Once everyone is in attendance at the meeting and you're ready to start, I would suggest starting with a prayer unless someone is opposed to that. I like to think that it brings a certain spirit to the meeting that helps everyone be in the right frame of mind.

At this point the person heading up the meeting will start by introducing everyone and breaking the ice. After the introductions, it's important to remind everyone that the reason they're there is for the well-being of the loved one involved and deciding what should be done and how everyone can help. This is where things need to be brought up that are specific to the loved one's needs. For example, if they need to be transported on a regular basis for doctor appointments, then that transportation needs to be addressed. How often are they going to need grocery items and who will be getting those? Who will be in charge of paying the loved one's bills? If the loved one needs twenty-four hour care, there needs to be a schedule made up for who will be staying nights and who will be with them during the day. If that's not possible, a discussion needs to happen about how the funds will be found to paid for someone that will be called in to help? Does the estate have the money or will the family members be sharing that cost? This is where things have the potential to go south. Often times when you ask family members to come up with extra money each month, that strikes a chord. Hopefully this won't be a problem for you. Another sore spot can be asking them to give up their time, which can often hurt more than giving of their money. This is one reason for having the meeting in the first place, as it will give you and all involved, insight as to what you're working with and where everyone stands.

If a family member is willing and has the time to take the role of the personal care giver on them, it's very important for the rest of the family to realize the gravity of this role. Everyone in the family should realize the level of commitment that this person will have to be willing to give. This is just not a sacrifice on that person's life, it can be a huge sacrifice for that person's immediate family as well. There will be much in the way of hidden cost's that this person will have to endure. Gas to go to and from the residence whether it be for groceries, doctor's appointments ect. These things should all be understood by the remainder of the siblings and the person willing to step up and do this humongous sacrifice should be financially compensated. The rest of the siblings should NEVER take the attitude that they are able to do it, so they should just do it out of the kindness of their heart. Let's be fair about this person called the caregiver. This person is going to be committing to a life changing experience becoming the caregiver for forever long it will last, which could be weeks, months or even years.

I do realize that many elderly are not capable of funding a personal caregiver and when someone in the family can do this for them, it will relieve a big burden from the parent and also from the family as a whole, but that person should not have to shoulder all the burdens from the physical aspects to the emotional or financial challenges. This person needs a break, every once in a while, to unwind and feel a normalcy creeping back into their lives as well. If there is absolutely no money that can be offered to this person, then the other siblings, if there are any, need to relieve this person on a regular basis or at least find someone that can. This is where the schedule should be brought up in the meeting and where all involved can tell the person in charge of the meeting that they will commit to their part in helping the caregiver.

If at all possible, the siblings or the estate should be committed to compensating the caregiver financially. If the family were to hire a professional caregiver to come in and live with their loved one twenty four hours a day it would literally cost in the thousands of dollars to do so, so it's important for all involved to understand just how much the person being willing to do this job is actually saving the family. To often this

person is taken advantage of by the other members of the family, because they know they are willing to do so and quite frankly that disgusts me to know end. Step up to the plate and care about your loved ones and do your part. It's the right thing to do and you'll be blessed for doing so anyway. Sometimes it's just an hour or two here and there that can make a huge difference for that caregiver and their immediate family. If the caregiver still has children that need them in their own home, this makes things even more hectic and complicated. Maybe the caregiver's husband or wife is not so thrilled about them taking on this responsibility and that puts even more pressure on them while trying to do the right thing for the parent. The siblings need to be aware of these things and be there to help the one doing the caregiving because if not, the caregiver will soon get burned out or have hard feelings with their own family or maybe even you.

Past Family Problems:

Many families have history to overcome. Someone offended you here or you offended them their or they were treated better by their parents than you, there are endless examples of why families have bad feelings involved in their relationships. Just remember, it's always easy to find fault with someone if you really want to and it's even easier to find it with our family members. I'm not saying that there aren't times when you might have legitimate reasons to be upset with someone. People make mistakes and sometimes they aren't sorry for it, but in the situation where you have to work together to help a loved one such as your parent, there needs to be a way to get past it. I think it's safe to say that no one really wants problems with family members and given the choice, we would rather have good relationships than not.

Love is the key to making this difficult situation go smoother. If you truly love your parents and want the best for them during this time in their life, you'll find a way to make it work. Life is very short and going through it with hard feelings towards another brother or sister is NOT worth it. In the meeting where everyone is involved, take the opportunity to tell everyone involved how much you love and care for them and your parents. If there's been bad blood or hard feelings in the past, be the bigger person in order to help your parents in the long run. Put the small things aside and get over them, even if you think the other person won't react the way you think they should. Even if they don't, no one in that meeting can hold you responsible for not trying to do the right thing. No one can walk away saying that you didn't give you're all. Who knows, it might change the way others have been thinking and feeling as well. One example might be, "I know we've had our problems in the past and I want to let you know, that I'm sorry for my part in those issues and since we're here to help mom and dad, I'm willing to work with you in any way possible to make that happen". I can promise you that after you make the try, no matter what the outcome, you'll feel a great peace come over you and you'll be glad you did.

Visits:

Everyone knows how important it is to elderly people to have company and visits from family. In the life of many elderly people, they long for visits from others. They

get very lonely being alone for so long. Loneliness also leads to depression and we know from learning about that, it can be a terrible thing.

When visiting, keep an eye out for changes that may be occurring such as mail piling up or the plants not getting watered or bruises suggesting a recent fall.

It's important to ask others to stop in periodically and check on them. Often times others are glad to help out when they can.

In reality, it only takes a small portion of our time to make an elderly person's week and if it's your parent it probably isn't an issue. If it's someone else's parent and there's nobody to visit them, give of your time to change a life. They'll appreciate it so much more than you'll probably realize.

I remember having an aunt and uncle on my father's side that we're both in a state hospital for many years together. They were both in wheelchairs from the time that they were teenagers. When I was just a small child, my parents would take me to see them on occasion. I used to hate going to that place because it was such an awful place in my eyes. There were people that were out of their heads making strange noises and walking everywhere and I remember vividly being afraid of them. My uncle passed away, but my aunt lived many years after his passing. After my college years, I was a music teacher in a public school, close to where the hospital was. I went to that school once a week and decided one day that I would go and visit her.

I will never forget the look on her face when she first saw me come in. She lit up light a Christmas tree and called for all the nurses to come meet her nephew. It was a wonderful experience and I decided to go see her each week after that. She even purposely started a roomer on the floor with the other patients that I was her boy friend and they would all watch for me each Tuesday. It sounds like a small thing, but to my aunt, it just made her week. I dare say that it lifted the spirits of everyone on the floor. I didn't do anything special in those visits, I just gave her a little of my time. She has since then past several years ago, but I will never forget the difference those visits made in her life.

Take the time to visit the elderly and listen to what they have to say. I can promise you; it will be some of the most rewarding minutes of your life. They have lived in a different era and they know things we couldn't possibly know. By doing it for them, you gain for yourself. You've heard the old saying that kids say the darnedest things, well so do the elderly and they truly are a real treat to be around.



Medical Alert Services:

This brings us to what my company

specializes in. Home medical alarm devices for the elderly. Family First Alert llc provides the elderly with alert buttons that in the event of an emergency, the client can press their button, which is worn on their wrist or around their neck and get the help they need. The buttons are waterproof and designed to be worn at all times. These types of devices are very reliable and can save a person's life. Family First Alert llc boast's the industry's lowest price for the service they provide, but there are many other companies out there to choose from as well. I would have to say that most of these companies offer a similar service and actually do a pretty good job. I would caution anyone looking into any alert button company, to look for one that doesn't require the client to sign any long- term contracts. They shouldn't have to pay for more than a month at a time to get the best rate. Other than that, for the most part, there isn't a huge difference. Of course, we at Family First Alert llc care deeply for the elderly and take great pride in providing the best service we can to them. We would love for you to give us a try. CALL US at: 304-813-7878 or 801-738-0005, or see us on the web at: www.familyfirstalert.com



Household Aids:

There are many things that can make the life of an elderly person much easier. Many of these devices can be found in your local pharmacies or health stores or medical equipment stores.

Some such devices are the following.



The gripping claw can come in very handy when your parent needs to pick up something a little to far away or to low. Using this device will help prevent bending over that could cause a fall. This specific device at the time of this printing was available on Amazon.com for a little over \$20.00.



The shower chair can literally be a lifesaver. This lightweight chair can be easily placed inside the bathtub to help those that are not stable on their feet. This particular model is available online for a little over \$75.00.



Tub rails are very important for those that are weak or unstable on their feet trying to enter the tub. This particular device is available online at for a little under \$65.00.



Smoke alarms are an essential piece of equipment for any home, but for the elderly person who might not see that well anymore, or not notice the little warning signs of a fire it is a must. I would recommend having one of these throughout the home and make it a regular point to check the battery life on each one. This particular model is made by First Alert and can be purchased at the time of this printing for a little under \$34.00.

The Will:

I can't stress enough how important it is to have a good will, one that is done clearly and precise. A will where there's no room for error, or misinterpretation is invaluable and can put a stop to many problems before they arise.

It's also important to consider the "Stuff". By stuff, I mean the things like mom's favorite chair, or her china dishes, dad's golf clubs, or the old car, or in our case, the Robert E. Lee letter that has been in the family since the civil war. If the parents are able to make theses decisions, then they should keep a clear and concise record in a bank vault that states where each item is to end up.

When my mother passed, she did have a will, but it was one that was physically written by my sister after having talked with my mother. It was the only will that she had and the only thing we had to go on. For the most part, we got along just fine, because of being a pretty close family, but there were little things, that would have been nice, if they had been clearer and thought out more in advance. I remember my nephew coming to our house one day asking for this large cast iron skillet that was my mothers. I remember it as a kid as being the skillet my mother always used to make hard tack candy in. About two or three years previous, my mother had given it to my wife. She had told her she wouldn't be making anymore candy and that it was hers. It wasn't that big of a deal, so we just gave it to him, but the entire problem could have been easily avoided with clear and precise directions.

Making a will early on, is crucial as well. Don't wait till the elderly parent gets to the point where they don't remember what they have previously done or even what they have. The skillet is a prime example of this. My mother's intent was not to create a problem by giving it to my wife, but it was just that she honestly didn't remember it to tell my sister later.

Make sure the will is typed up so that it's not a mystery to read. Don't leave anything up to interpretation. The clearer the will is written the better. It's important that they will be strong in both contents and legibility. It is always a good idea to have the will notarized as well. Even the closest families can have problems and react in ways that you would never expect them to act. This document needs to be looked at as a business document for all involved. Making things legal and up front will help in the long run to preserve the closeness of the family. Don't ever look at it as you are sending a signal of not trusting a sibling. It has nothing to do with that and everything to do with keeping the family love on track. No parent wants to leave this life worrying whether or not their kids are going to fight over what things they have. Life is way too short to have trivial fights that can cause hard feelings for a lifetime.

So, if there isn't a will in place now, how do you go about getting it started? First of all, it's important to approach the parent in a way that doesn't lead them to feel like it's going to be necessary any time soon. You might suggest that you're going to write your own will and ask them for their input. During the writing of yours you could ask if they want to work on theirs as well. In one of those family meetings discussed earlier, you could share with your siblings your thoughts on the subject and allow them to do the same. This can, in some families, be a touchy subject and I want to really caution you not to involve your parents with any disagreements or issues that would cause them uneasiness or worry. Most things just aren't worth the arguing over. If in doubt, just leave it up to the parent upon what you will receive in the will and try to be happy. There's one thing for sure that should be remembered. You take your relationships with you after your pass, but you leave your properties right where they are. It's very important to remember the things that really count, when all is said and done. Families are forever and of most importance. Stuff is just stuff and I remember years ago when my grandmother died, my brother was given a canoe several years before and at her death, my uncle wanted the canoe. This created many hard feelings within the family and my mother wouldn't talk to her brother for over 7 years. One day my father got thinking about it and thought how stupid it was and decided to give my uncle a call. My uncle had been troubled over the lack of the relationship just like my mother had been for so long,

but both were to proud to take the first step. Because my father acted wisely and got them back together, they were able to enjoy each other again before my uncle found out he had cancer and died about two years later. I have often thought how terrible she would have felt, if my father had not interceded and she'd learned two years later of my uncle's death. Don't allow this to happen in your family. Avoid these types of issues before they occur. There's nothing more important than family. No amount of money or property will ever be as important as that.

Death:

This subject of course is directed more towards the children than it is the elderly. Part of taking care of the elderly is how you will take care of yourself at the time of their death. If the parent is so concerned about how you will handle their death and how you will be afterwards, this could very easily add stress to their lives. We have already discussed what stress can do to the elderly and how dangerous it is to their being able to recover from sickness. If your parent is comfortable in knowing that you will be ok and that all will be well with you, it can relieve a lot of stress for them while they are living.

As I said in an earlier section, I was born late in the lives of my parents and because of that, I did quite a bit of worrying over their health through out my growing up. This continued until their eventual passing. I know that my mother especially, was very concerned about how I would react when it was her time to pass. I didn't always do all that I could to reassure her that I would be ok. I spent too much time telling her that I didn't want her to go, instead of telling her that everything would work out.

It's very important that we take extra steps to make our parents feel this ease of concern. For those that continue on, it's a very difficult time, but dwelling on it with our parent, does them no good and really doesn't help us either. There are many things worse than death. Living in constant pain and anguish everyday and not having a full life can be much worse. Death can sometimes be a relief for not just the person dieing, but the family as well.

My mother became so ill at the end of her life that it was very difficult seeing her suffer so much. When she did pass, it was hard, but I found much comfort in the fact that she was no longer suffering everyday and I knew that she had moved on to a far better place. I also knew that it wasn't the end and that I would see her and my father again someday.

Living a life without religious faith really changes the game dramatically. Without getting into a religious point of view here, I will just say for me, I know that there IS life after death and that life does not stop when our state of being on earth ends. If this is something that you don't believe in, you may find this topic much more difficult to deal with. I would welcome you to search out your options and do what is best for you. For more information on my personal beliefs, I would welcome any questions via email at familyfirstalertceo@gmail.com.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I hope this book has been of some help to you or a loved one. Please refer to it often. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome you and thank you for being part of our Family First Alert llc family. We care deeply for you and your wellbeing and please know that we are always here for you, whenever you need us. God bless you and your family. If you need us for anything, please don't hesitate to give us a call at **304-813-7878** or **801-738-0005** or visit us on the web at:

familyfirstalert.com

Thank you once again for taking the time to read our booklet and visit us. We would love to help you with our services anytime.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Taylor
CEO Family First Alert llc