

Your Guide to Long Distance Caregiving

Families who struggle to care for a parent across the miles have a unique disadvantage. They cannot be there to know what is really happening. It is often difficult and frustrating to reach doctors or social service agencies and to be able to coordinate the needed care. The older parent may forget what the doctor has told them, or choose not to “burden” their child with problematic information. Indeed, many adult children are not aware that there is a problem until a visit is made, and they see the changes in the parent’s physical, mental or emotional functioning.



There are a number of challenges that the adult child faces when dealing with long-distance care of an older parent. These include the following: When phone conversations are held, everything sounds fine. “No need to worry dear. I’m doing fine on my own,” when you know in your gut that everything is not fine.

The emotions associated with long distance are often difficult and may include the following:

- **Guilt** - over the fact that you are not able to be physically present all the time
- **Grief** - over your relative’s decline in health
- **Sadness** - since your relative is showing signs of decline
- **Anxiety** - at having to rush back and forth to visit and manage care from a geographical distance, and not knowing what tomorrow will bring
- **Frustration** - since you can’t be there all the time
- **Anger** - at the whole situation
- **Fear** - of the unknown

Joining a caregiver support group is often very helpful in better understanding these feelings and getting better control over them.

While these emotions may make you feel powerless, there are many steps you can take to get an accurate assessment and develop a helpful care plan for your loved one.

The **National Caregiver Support Program** is an excellent place to start as they have staff who are “caregiver advisors or specialists” in every state. The National Family Caregiver Support Program can provide these services to a local or long distance caregivers.

- Screening and assessment
- Respite care or time off for the caregiver in several forms--companions, homemakers, home health aides, adult day care, and in-facility care
- Counseling
- Medical supplies such as disposable undergarments or nutritional supplements

The usual entry point for the **National Family Caregiver Support Program** (NFCSP) is the Senior Helpline (**727-217-8111**). The National Family Caregiver Support Program is available throughout the United States, with some variation in services offered in different areas. For more about this program, visit the U. S. Administration on Aging web site, www.aoa.gov. The program does not have a fee.

If your loved one has a major illness like Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease, consider contacting their national offices, who then can put you in touch with the local resources in your loved one’s community.

Long distance care giving can be a very frustrating and anxious endeavor and many in that role have found support by joining a caregivers group.

Fortunately, there is now a free **Long Distance Caregiving Guide** that organizes what you need to know; how to make a care plan; how to find resources and who is available to help you and your loved one. You can obtain this guide by contacting the Ethos Family Care advisor, **Leslie Ahern**, by calling **617-477-6676** or emailing her at lahern@ethocare.org.

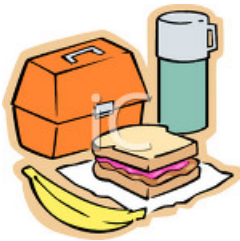
**Save This Lucky Date!
March 6, 2009**

That is when you are invited to the **Caregivers Luncheon**

Family Care advisor, Leslie Ahern, will be presenting **“Building Your Caregiver Resiliency”** Program. There is no charge but you must RSVP to **Katie Bolin at 617-226- 8949.**



New Lunch Time Support Groups



Some caregivers have expressed a need for a support group during the day. Many would prefer not to drive at night, work near Jamaica Plain or have a loved one in an adult daycare program.

We will be meeting at the **Ethos** office at **555 Amory St. in Jamaica Plain.** We are just steps from the Green Street subway stop. Parking can also be arranged.

Meetings will be held the **2nd and 4th Tuesdays** from **12:30 -1:30.** The Family Care advisor will also be available to help with questions and resources after the group. Beverages will be provided and you are welcome to bring your lunch.

The new lunch time group for will start on **Tuesday, February 24, 2009.** In March, there will be a support group on Tuesday **March 10th** and on Tuesday, **March 24th.**

There is no fee for the group but you must [re-register every month by calling **Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676.**

Caregiver Support Groups

Join other caregivers for refreshments and discussion in a caring, relaxed, and confidential setting on a monthly basis. Everyone is welcome and **there is no charge.** We ask that you pre-register first.

“Smoother Sailing” Alzheimer Education & Support Group

This free monthly group will meet on **Monday, February 2, 2009** and **Monday, March 3, 2009 from 6:00 -7:30 PM** at the Boston Rehabilitation Center in West Roxbury. Call Family Care Advisor, **Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676** to pre-register. The group provides support and education about dementia and the Alzheimer’s disease process.



We will learn behavioral techniques called Habilitation therapy. We will problem solve how to manage challenges like bathing, eating, toileting and anxiety. Our goal is to make “smoother sailing” of your every day care. We also will look at therapeutic activities to brighten everyone’s day. *“While we can not stop the stormy winds of dementia diseases, we can learn together how to better adjust our sails”.* © **Group Meets Every First Monday of the Month**

LGBT* Caregiver Support Group

The free monthly group will meet **Monday, February 2, 2009** and **March 2, 2009** from 6:00 - 7:30 PM at the Ethos’ office in Jamaica Plain. Contact: **Joanne Peskowitz at (617) 271-4182)**
*Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender

“Taking Care of Me” Support Group

The free monthly group will meet **Monday, February 23, 2009** and **Monday, March 16, 2009** at 6:00-7:30 PM in the Boston Rehabilitation Center in West Roxbury. It is accessible to MBTA and there is free parking. Refreshments are provided. Contact: **Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676.**



For more information, please contact:

Leslie Ahern
Family Care Advisor

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617-477-6676 LAhern@ethocare.org

<http://www.ethocare.org>
www.caregiveralliance.org