

Family Caregiving of Senior Members During a Crisis

As caregivers charged with the wellbeing of another human being, we work to make their lives easier, functional, and manageable. But the truth is so much in life is out of our control – even in so-called normal times. So what helps in times of crisis, is to focus, and act on, that which we can control, and work to accept that which we cannot.

- Some adult children cannot see their parents who are in senior living facilities.
- Some are concerned that their parents won't stay home and avoid infection.
- Some are concerned about the health of the paid caregivers who care for their parents.

As we navigate these unprecedented times, here are some suggestions for managing your caregiving situation:

Stock up.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends households prepare for possible illness by obtaining a two-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications, food and other essentials. Help your aging parents and relatives get prepared. Offer to run errands for them or arrange deliveries and assist them with calling insurance companies and pharmacies to order extra medication. One of the most valuable roles you can play is that of advocate for your older family members.

Establish alternative methods of communication.

In the event you will not be able to visit your aging parent, consider purchasing them a tablet for FaceTime or Skype sessions - if they are able to operate it. That way, even if you practice social distancing, they won't have to experience social isolation. If you are a long distance caregiver, reach out to your parent's neighbor or local Council on Aging and ask if they can serve as your eyes and ears during this time.

Deal in the concrete and don't pass on "moving facts."

Speaking of the news, when talking to an older person avoid sharing rumors and what -if scenarios. You can help alleviate any stress they may be experiencing by focusing on facts only. For example, instead of engaging in conjecture about whether or not the government will call for a lock down, share what is true right now. "Currently, the governor has ...," or, "At this time, travel has been prohibited only to...." Focus on the facts.

Lead with compassion.

In times of crisis, we can ease our stress and the stress of the people we care for by exhibiting compassion and understanding. This is especially helpful when interacting with paid caregivers who may be worried about their own family members while they care for yours. Remember, a smile can go a long way in helping everyone you interact with deal with stress and uncertainty.

For caregiving support, information and resources contact a **Senior Care Advisor**, a master's level geriatric social worker specializing in adult and senior care, at Care.com. Their services are free for BMC employees. Call **(855) 781-1303 x3** or email questions to **careplanning@care.com**