

# Spotlight On...

## Caring For Ailing Parents



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Like many “late boomer” or “sandwich generation” Canadians, I am dealing with the realities of ailing parents. Watching your parents age quickly is not easy. My wife went through this experience with her mother several years ago. It’s now my turn.

Fortunately, I’m not alone. Many of our friends and other extended family members:

1. Have gone through a similar experience
2. Are going through a similar experience
3. Are fully aware that a similar experience is coming their way very soon.

As the population in Canada gradually ages, this demographic trend will be with us for many more years. The good news is there are lots of resources and information available to assist. While every situation is unique, and we don’t pretend to have all the answers, let’s start with a few common suggestions:

### Open Communication

Keep the lines of communication with all family members as open as possible. In most cases, there may be one family member who others will look to. It may be “the eldest”, the “most responsible” or the one with previous experiences and professional capabilities who will take charge. In my family, that’s me...the eldest and the one with previous experience and professional knowledge.

### Get Organized

Obtaining and documenting specific details, without prying and respecting one’s privacy, can be challenging. Physical, cognitive and financial details are very helpful. Ask if they have a current Will and



estate plan or if their plans need updating. Find out if they have set up a Power of Attorney (POA) for health, financial control or both. Gather a list of their medical professionals, service providers and other important contacts.

### Set Up A Support Network

Caregiving can take a serious toll on an individual or a family, even when done out of love. To avoid burnout and keep relationships healthy, make sure you have a support system in place. This may mean dividing responsibilities among siblings or other family members, having the support of a spouse, or even hiring help such as house cleaners or in-home care. It’s also wise to obtain legal and financial advice from trusted sources. In addition to taking the burden away from a primary caregiver, a support system can help preserve the original family dynamic and minimize the sense of parenting your own parents.

We’re here to help.

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