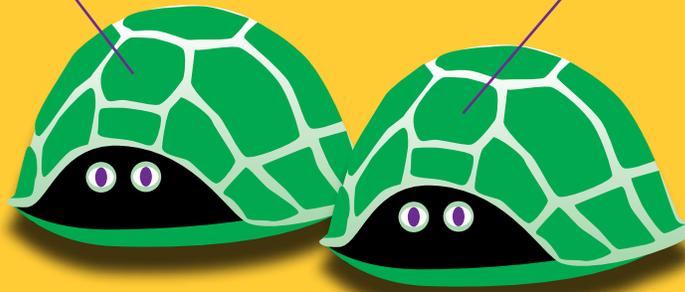


I'm not moving
and that's that!

Of course I can drive.
My reflexes are as good
as they ever were!



How Did They Get So Old???

(And What Am I Supposed to Do About It?)

A Scrapbook of Life with Aging Parents.
Initiated by your L3 Family Council



L3 Family
Gateway

About this Document

The L3 Mission

L3 is a global organization that serves as a resource to support leaders and their families so they may positively impact their world through the strengthening of family bonds, the promotion of meaningful friendships and by encouraging learning, caring, sharing and giving among its highly diverse group of members.

The L3 Family Gateway advances the Mission of L3 in these ways:

From the challenges of aging parents to the deep satisfactions of close relationships with children and grandchildren in birth families and blended families, L3 provides insight, opportunity and moments of unique sharing. This Gateway addresses a wide variety of family issues, including dealing with and treating aging parents, mentoring family members, blended families, family seminars, wealth preservation and succession in the family business.

L3 Family Council

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Russ and Gail Smith

As someone whose name we can't recall just now so memorably said, "Old age is no place for sissies."

Actually, it was Bette Davis. And she was in a position to know.

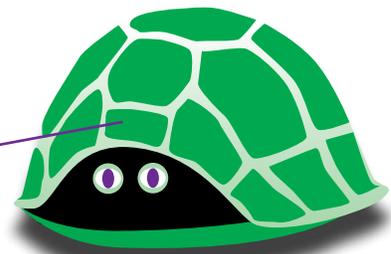
The discomforts of old age, however, are not limited to the elderly. Taking care of aging parents—once the most powerful and respected figures in our lives—can be just plain upsetting. We might as well say it aloud: elderly parents can get cranky, recalcitrant, and stubborn, and generally don't want to do what they're asked. And when it's our turn, we will be, too, despite our best intentions.

It's an emotional situation—and one many of us in L3 face. Hence this "scrapbook." By sharing insights, anecdotes, solutions and resources—even pictures—we can become a support group of peers.

What we have to start with is a series of concerns that as a Council, we found we had in common. We have added brief paragraphs that distill what we have learned from our own experiences. In each section, you'll find an email link—please use it to send a comment, relevant story, family photos and reminiscences, resources you've found helpful...really anything you'd like to share. (Anonymity is OK.)

And come back to view the scrapbook often, to see what's new from fellow members, and share it with your own children. Just as when they were young children, they will learn from your example. And who knows—that bright 20-year old you've taught so well may have an insight to contribute today.

I'm not lost.
I just can't remember
where I meant to go!



Issue 1: Who's in charge here?

1. What do parents want?

Ask them and really respect what they say, as they often have clear wants and desires. Do it early in the aging process so that their thoughts can be clearly expressed. Be aware they may prefer not to communicate their wants to you, but to a friend or social worker.

2. How should decisions get made?

As long as parents can participate, let them be involved in decisions so that their dignity is maintained. Try to make decisions with the family and early, especially when the parent is healthy. This gives everyone a say in the process and ownership of it. Meet frequently as a group so that all are aware of issues

3. How do I deal with parents' rights?

Respect them. The tendency in dealing with this situation is to control everything and this is a potential pitfall making the parent subservient and feeling a total loss of control. While they can, they should be urged to make their own decisions. This is harder but truly respects them as individuals. And while they are alive, it is their life to live, so show respect for their value system as well as your own.

4. How do I let go of control?

The tendency to control all prevails but it is important that decisions be made with siblings. Surrender has a nice ring to it and can be quite enabling when properly employed.

5. What boundaries, limits and commitments must be established?

Because it is so emotionally charged, dealing with aging parents can overpower the caregivers. It is important to establish some boundaries so that relationships with siblings and the spouse are not strained further. Decide who has the ability to do what and empower them to act. Taking responsibility, being dependable and living up to commitments made is critical for the whole family.

6. How do parents relate to changing roles?

As parents age they move gradually into a "child" mode. Be conscious of this and let it happen gradually. Try to accept the change and modify your role as the situation dictates.

[Click here to share your experience](#)

Issue 2: The Practical Aspects of Ongoing Care

1. How much care giving do you do?

Preparation for events is critical so get well informed. Without this actions will be erratic and reactionary. If possible try to balance the amount of time spent between all care-givers. This is an enormous task that drains emotions.

2. How much care giving should be done by the family vs. professionals?

Try to balance it. Utilize the professionals to do the most difficult tasks. Be the loving child and spend time enabling this to occur. Be open minded as you listen to or watch your parents and become educated about the alternatives available to them. Be prepared to discuss and challenge the professionals and your parents.

3. Sibling discourse- Who does what and how much?

Keep everyone informed. There are websites that enable updates frequently. For a good site see Care Giver Helper at www.caregiverhelper.com. Try to allocate duties so that the burden of caring in time and emotional stress is not borne by one sibling if possible.

4. When should I ask for help?

Get very prepared early. Ask questions early, ask them often. Get professional help and maintain it.

5. Giving support/getting support

This is needed on all fronts. Communicate often. Give support when asked as long as it isn't inappropriate or harmful for you. Support family. Get support from experts, family and other available willing participants

6. For chronic illness, what technology exists to help during treatment?

Get to the best resources and study what is available. L3 Health/GlobalAccess, a partnership with CMN that covers your parents as well as you, your children and grandchildren, is a good place to start looking for referrals to top providers worldwide in fields like gerontology. For medical emergencies, too, which will arise, it will be helpful to keep their 24-hour Case Manager number in your cell phone.

Toll-free in North America.... 1-866-866-3248

Outside North America 1-905-532-2955

Issue 2: The Practical Aspects of Ongoing Care (continued)

7. How do I honor my parent?

Celebrate life and provide opportunities to do it with family members, especially grandchildren. What grandchildren are currently doing and 'accomplishing' is fodder for the elderly mind. Providing opportunities for this sort of interchange....in fact encouraging family members [especially grandchildren] to stay in touch with their grandparents via carefully written letters and as many personal interchanges as possible [telephone calls] provides a dimension which will keep elderly parents [grandparents] aware and interested in life. It is also a gift to the grandchild to have them participate in this aspect of a natural process.

Publish a book on the parent's life by conducting an interview with the parent and each family member. They can build on each other's stories with narrative and photos. This document will be an ongoing beacon for the family by passing on the legacy of the parent. The book becomes a great gift to both the parent and the family. While the parent is still cognitive, ask them questions about the past that you may have wondered about.

8. How do I take the car keys away?

You are about to take away one of their last bastions of independence, and it will be one of the toughest conversations you will have. Since this is an emotional issue, rational arguments are not likely to be effective, even though an objective fact, like a dented fender or a series of tickets, makes the decision necessary.

Help your parents talk about what having the car means to them, as well as how they might feel if they accidentally hurt someone. Then work together to find ways for them to keep the independence without the danger: a driver, if you can afford it; the number of a nearby car service, etc.

[Click here to share your experience](#)

Issue 3: But what about me?

1. How do we deal with the reality that some aspirations, hopes and dreams of parents will never be realized?

Parents all of a sudden are elderly and we are still young(ish). We think that time has stood still for them but it has marched on. All of a sudden we realize that some of the things they hoped for and dreamt will never be. In research with seniors, the seniors know “they’re old and have to deal with it.” They’re fully aware of their age; it’s the caregiver who has the problem, not the senior. The reality of the parent’s condition must be accepted and life lived for today. We need to help them see that we as caregivers also see and appreciate the beauty of each day and living the life they have to the fullest, every day. Their attitude needs to be braced with support and positive messages from family and friends about life and legacy.

2. How does care for aging parents affect a marriage relationship and each of the partners?

In most marriages, the partner with ailing parents devotes a substantial amount of time to the parent and takes time away from the spouse. The feeling of the loss of a parent rocks the core of the adult child, and needs to be understood and dealt with tenderly. Both spouses need to make the effort to communicate a lot more during this time. It is a temporary condition while the parent is alive, and can change to a different form of anxiety and guilt when the parent dies.

3. What is the emotional impact?

The reality of a forthcoming loss of a parent is overpowering. Understand this is a grieving process even though the parent is not dead. These feelings go up and down; they become extreme and then subside only to escalate again.

4. How do I deal with the loss?

It is just plain difficult. Stay close to your friends and your spouse. The pain will subside. Think and remember the fun times and the good things about your parent. Seek counseling if you have the resources during and after. Just because the death of parents is a natural part of the life cycle doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt. This is a relationship you have had all your life and it has ended.

5. How do I deal with guilt regarding the decisions I make on my parents behalf?

People do feel guilty when they must make choices contrary to how the parent feels. Try to be accepting that you are making the best decision for the parent, their physical and mental well being, and the impact of their actions on others.

6. How should I prepare my children for dealing with me when, in turn, I am the aging parent?

- State what you want while you still have the ability to determine it
- Be clear and try to put it in writing
- You are setting an example by how you deal with this situation with your own parents.

7. Where can I go for reliable information?

A search of Amazon books for “Aging Parents” yields 10,940 results. So for books you personally might find most useful, friends and relatives who are “on the same page” as you are will be your best guide. Also, your parents’ physician or a gerontologist may lead you in useful directions.

And of course, there’s the web. Here is a list of websites members of our group have found useful and reliable—and you’ll find that these connect you to many more:

- Eldercare
<http://www.aging-parents-and-elder-care.com>
- AARP
<http://www.aarp.org/family/caregiving>
- American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org/more/commserv/seniors.html>
- Caregivingblog
<http://www.caregivingblog.com>
- Children of Aging Parents
<http://www.caps4caregivers.org>
- Eldercare
<http://www.eldercare.gov>
- Family Caregiver Alliance
<http://www.caregiver.org>
- Home Instead Senior Care
<http://www.homeinstead.com/home.aspx>
- National Family Caregivers Association
<http://www.nfcacares.org>
- New Lifestyles
<http://newlifestyles.com>
- Web MD
www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/caregiving
- Visiting Nurses Association of America
<http://www.vnaa.org/vnaa/g/?h=HTML/PATientCaregiverInfo.html>
- The New Old Age: New York Times blog with links to many other resources
<http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com>

[Click here to share your experience](#)

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Now what
was I saying?

