

Foreword

I was delighted to be asked to write a foreword to this volume. The National Career Development Association is enhancing its series with a monograph that adds a new dimension to our understanding of how personal and career issues intersect. I have seen no other work that addresses care for elder or ill relatives, or the need for self-care, in a way that this book does, particularly in its attention to the career development implications of this common life event.

Some years ago my father was ill with dementia caused by small strokes, my mother had broken her hip and was in general ill health, and I lived about 600 miles away. I am an only child, so every two or three weeks I would leave work early, fly to another city, rent a car, drive over an hour, and visit until Sunday afternoon, when I would make the reverse trip.

Therefore, I am personally very familiar with the issues in this monograph. At the same time, a treasured colleague quit her job to care for her elderly mother in another state, and I had (and have) friends who are struggling with similar challenges. Often the need for eldercare happens at the same time as childcare – thus the term the sandwich generation, as people are caught (sandwiched) between the needs of the older and the younger generation. Career demands make this a club sandwich for many. A photo journal about caring for an elderly parent with dementia and Parkinson's in *The National Geographic Magazine* (November 2008) described a similar situation thusly: "There was never a minute of the day that somebody didn't need something from me" (p. 16).

The chapters in this monograph detail how counselors and other career professionals have handled caregiving responsibilities. The contributors describe how they have balanced the needs of family members with their own needs and with their work responsibilities. They discuss the emotions they experienced, the challenges they have faced, and the support they have learned to access. It is my hope that you will find it interesting and useful for yourself and for your clients.

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Introduction

Do traffic jams drive you crazy? It's just going to get worse, unless we do something about it now. Similarly, it makes sense for communities to prepare for eldercare long before baby-boomer traffic causes a major bottleneck on the roads, in the hospitals, in the housing market, in the family, and in the workforce.

The time has come to empower the “shadow workforce”—the over-worked, underpaid population of family caregivers. “Family caregivers—untrained, under-supported, and unseen—constitute a ‘shadow workforce,’ acting as geriatric case managers, medical record keepers, paramedics, and patient advocates to fill dangerous gaps in a system that is uncoordinated, fragmented, bureaucratic, and often depersonalized” (Bookman & Harrington, 2007, p. 1005).

Although there are numerous articles on the plight of family caregivers, most referenced a 1997 report by the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The lack of recent research points to a need and an opportunity for future research on this underserved population. The following statistics from the 1997 NAC/AARP study are staggering:

- Almost 25% of households are caring for a relative or friend who is at least 50 years old (p. 11).
- 60% of caregivers are working, 52% full time and 12 % part time (p. 13).
- Asian and Black caregivers are more likely than White caregivers to be involved in caring for more than one person (p. 16).

A more recent 2004 report by NAC and AARP reveals that caregivers’ challenges continue to grow:

- Nearly 60% of caregivers are currently employed (p. 32).

- Over 60% of caregivers are married or living with a partner; 59% have worked and managed caregiving responsibilities at the same time (p. 9).
- The typical caregiver is a 46-year-old woman who has at least some college experience and provides more than 20 hours of care each week to her mother, but 40% of caregivers are men (p. 9).

The cost of eldercare to employers and society in general is equally alarming. The economic value of caregiving to society is close to \$200 billion per year. The cost to businesses to replace women caregivers who quit their jobs because of their caregiving responsibilities is estimated at \$3.3 billion annually (Arno et al., 2002). Two-thirds of working caregivers providing assistance to a family member or friend aged 65+ decreased their work hours or took unpaid leave in order to meet their caregiving duties (Newman & Young, 2003).

The impact of employees’ caregiving responsibilities on their work is devastating, both to them and to their workplace. Employers as well as employees would benefit by preparing for the caregiving tsunami, which takes a toll on working caregivers and interferes with their productivity.

How Can Educators Empower Family Caregivers?

For a start, educational programs for family medicine residents, nurses, nursing assistants, human resource personnel, and counselors could provide courses and continuing education training in family caregiver issues across the lifespan, including the vocational consequences of caregiving. In addition, caregiving skills could be taught as part of career development, family, and consumer education across the lifespan from elementary school to adult education and in the workplace.

Career professionals, by learning about the challenges of the growing population of caregivers and by developing tools to work with caregivers, can help this population with career decisions that have to be made as a result of caregiving responsibilities. In addition, through education and training, caregiver support professionals can help themselves learn how to manage their own caregiving situations.

Relationship Between Career and Caregiving

Career is “the time extended working out of a purposeful life pattern through work undertaken by the person.” Work is an “activity that produces something of value for one’s self or others,” including unpaid volunteer work, as well as paid employment (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2009, p. 6). According to Sears (1982), career development is the ‘total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical, and chance factors that combine to shape one’s career (p. 139).

Caregiving could be thought of as one of several “life roles” that constitute one’s career (Super, 1980). The sequence and number of roles people have might result in role conflict, as well as “self-actualization” and “satisfaction” (p. 287). Personal caregiving stories demonstrate the value of self-understanding to resolve role conflicts between caregiving and other work roles.

Career is also a course or passage through life. If we think of the role of caregiver as the designated driver on a life journey that can take one in many directions, rather than as one road, then the role of family caregivers becomes richer, more variable, and open to exploration of alternative decision-making options.

Eldercare Focus

Most of us are family or informal caregivers at some point in our lives (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). For the purposes of this monograph, we focus on eldercare because

of the already high one-to-four ratio of caregivers to cared-for in that age group, and because the large number of aging baby boomers is going to cause that ratio to increase over the next 30 years (Knickman & Snell, 2002). The author estimates that by the time her adult children are in their 60s, one-third of the U.S. population will be providing eldercare.

Whether by choice or by chance, people of all ages may find themselves in challenging eldercare situations. A young counselor recently said that she was caring for her grandmother due to family strife. The contributors present a variety of ways that they have dealt with caring for elderly loved ones and offer different strategies to support family caregivers, as well as those who are cared-for.

A strategy that all the contributors mention is gathering together a support team. Studies show that counseling and support groups, in combination with respite and other services, help caregivers remain in their caregiving role longer, with less stress and greater satisfaction (Landro, 2007).

Morman (Chapter 7) cautions potential caregivers not to do eldercare alone. In her contribution to the monograph, she cites Goldberg and Kendall (1997): “Caregiving is not something that you innately know how to do; it’s an acquired skill. If it takes a village—not just a single family—to raise a child, it takes a community or a team to care for elders” (p. 2).

Stages of Caregiving

In the organization of this monograph, caregiving is broken down into chronological stages. Each stage has its own set of characteristics. For example, “Preparing for Caregiving” most likely would not require the emotional and physical demands of being “In the Midst of Caregiving.” Therefore, it would make sense to research accessible housing before becoming immersed in a caregiving situation. “Moving in and out of Caregiving” and “Caregiving – A Continual Life Process” reflect the pervasiveness of the caregiving role through-

out one's life and career. The last unit, "Where Do We Go from Here?" offers a compassionate career and caregiving process for career counselors to support eldercare clients. Each stage is introduced, followed by the stories and strategies of psychologists, career counselors, coaches, educators, and other dedicated working professionals who have experienced, first-hand, the challenges of caregiving while earning a living.

The Value of Reading and Writing

Writing gives us the time and space to reflect, to "be" with ourselves, not just "do" for others, to tap that part of ourselves that often lies dormant, waiting to be acknowledged, nurtured, recognized, and appreciated. By reading our stories, you have an opportunity to identify with our challenges, insights, and reflections and apply our concepts to your own or a loved one's situation.

Like other life and career roles, caregiving is an opportunity for learning, for enhancing the care of loved ones, for self-care, and for deepening family relationships. The stories that follow are all about people who had some resources—financial, educational, emotional—that may not be available to everyone. For example, the choice to work less, work at home, etc., may not be a viable option for people who work in manufacturing or retail, or who cannot afford to work fewer hours.

You are invited to journey through these pages to pick up whatever life lessons you would like to carry and to leave behind baggage that you no longer find useful for your career, caregiving, and care-receiving journey. Donna Brouns, our youngest contributor, who helped her mother cope with a life-threatening illness, says, "caregiving may be one of the most important jobs anyone can do" (Chapter 8). Louise Morman says, "Although it may not seem evident in the midst of the experience, caring for a frail older parent has the potential to provide a learning experience superior to any other" (Chapter 7).

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