



*The experience of caring for an aging parent should be a time for siblings to mutually support one another; however, this is not always the case! The pressure of such responsibility can lead to strained relations and, at times, some conflict.*

Friction may occur when siblings are in denial over a parent's condition. Adult siblings may refuse involvement or seem unable to accept the reality of the parent's health needs because they are protecting themselves from facing the eventual death of the parent and their own loss. The more active sibling may become bitter or angry.

Most often, friction occurs because the active sibling feels there is unequal division of care giving duties. This may lead the overburdened caregiver to feel frustrated and resentful and other siblings to feel uninformed and left out.

How can families come together and deliver the best quality care possible for the parent? Here are some suggestions:

- Express your feelings honestly and directly.
- Let the siblings know their help is needed and wanted.
- Provide siblings with a list of tasks included in caregiving.
- Allow siblings to help in ways they are able.
- Divide tasks according to individual abilities, current life pressures and personal freedoms.
- Assistance with errands, finances, legal work or other indirect care may be the best option for some family members.

- Express appreciation to family members for any help provided.
- Keep family members informed regarding the parent's condition.
- Accept siblings for who they are and expect differences in opinions.
- Try to respect other's perceptions and find opportunities to compromise.
- If communication is contentious, arrange a family meeting that includes and outside facilitator such as a friend, religious leader, social worker or counselor.
- If siblings are unable to help with care, seek other assistance to provide a respite for the caregiver.

Try to understand the dynamics of family care among other siblings. Forgive those who refuse to get involved. Work through any negative emotions and take care of yourself. Remember: If you are not healthy, you cannot take care of the elderly!

Material for this fact sheet was obtained from FCA National Center on Caregiving (*Spring 2004*), *Caregiving and Sibling Relationships: Challenges and Opportunities*.

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