

As I See It

Help in caring for elders

By Cheryl Smith - Special to The Star



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If you have elderly parents, you're probably overwhelmed with the increasing assistance needed and the considerations that have to be made as you help plan for their futures.

As the population of today's aged increases, more and more families of elderly face a caregiving crisis as they struggle to make decisions and do what's right for their loved ones.

Often aging loved ones refuse even to discuss making changes, and thus families try to keep the peace by providing the needed care themselves. In fact, more than 80 percent of elder care today is provided by family members. Families work an average of 71 hours a week at their caregiving duties.

Given these numbers, it's not surprising that more than half of family caregivers report feeling burned out and overwhelmed.

Making sense of the information on elder care and wading through the options can be frustrating. Getting an outside perspective from geriatric-care managers can help identify things you may not have considered and help with creating realistic plans.

Geriatric-care managers can help assess your elders' needs and create care plans with options and recommendations. In many cases, seniors will be more forthcoming with care managers than with their own family members. Geriatric-care managers can help by providing unbiased views, outside of family dynamics.

As specialists with extensive education and experience in elder care, geriatric-care managers can save you from making costly mistakes and help provide inside knowledge on care facilities and options in your area.

A geriatric-care manager will:

- Conduct an in-person professional assessment.
- Recommend a plan of care.
- Arrange care services.
- Identify community resources.
- Monitor needs and be a source of information.

With professional advice, real-life expertise and inside knowledge on local facilities and resources, care managers can help you feel less overwhelmed and help you make sense of the options available. Their support and role in managing care can help ease the emotional distress for both you and your loved ones, allowing you to focus on enjoying the time you have together.

Cheryl Smith is the president of Kansas City Home Care. She lives in Kansas City.