



"Our Family Helping Yours"
(925) 240-5770

The HomeLife Connection

SPRING 2018

Serving all of East County, Tracy and Rio Vista!

CAREGIVER PROFILE



Our caregivers are totally committed, highly qualified and carefully selected individuals who are personally and thoroughly screened, bonded and insured.

Most importantly our caregivers are dependable and extraordinarily caring of others. In addition to their previous experience, our caregivers receive continuous training that includes a specialized curriculum exclusive to The Senior's Choice that results in them becoming Certified Companion Aides™. These highly qualified and trained caregivers are ready to help you and your loved ones with a variety of daily activities such as:

- Caring companionship
- Meal planning and preparation
- Incidental transportation
- Running errands
- Light housekeeping
- Medication reminders
- Assistance with bathing and grooming
- Assistance with bill paying
- Information and referral services

Our personalized and affordable services are available 7 days a week and can range from a few hours a day to 24 hour and live in care.

Welcome to the Spring 2018 HomeLife Connection

Welcome to our Spring 2018 *HomeLife Connection*! We wish to congratulate our Caregiver of the Season, Darlene MacDonald!

Darlene has been a dedicated caregiver with HomeLife Senior Care since July of 2016. She came to HomeLife well experienced and even recruited a client after only working for us for a few weeks. She excels in all areas of her duties as a caregiver. She currently cares for three clients on a regular basis, as well as fills in for other clients when needed. Her clients have expressed their gratitude for Darlene to the office staff, saying they appreciate her skill set and her professionalism. Darlene is wonderful at making her clients feel secure and respected. She is also very accommodating, keeping her schedule flexible for her clients so that she is available when they need her.

Recently, Darlene began caring for her mother-in-law who has been ill. Even with her added responsibilities, she manages to make it to her scheduled shifts and

is consistently on time. The scheduling department doesn't have to worry about Darlene's attendance, which is greatly appreciated! When Darlene takes personal time off, she gives plenty of notice and does her best to assist the scheduling department in covering her shifts.

Darlene has shown interest in advancing her caregiving knowledge by participating in voluntary in-house trainings, including a special weekend training designed to teach advanced caregivers how to be training facilitators for new caregivers. This has prepared her to help with caregiver orientations.

Darlene is an amazing part of our HomeLife Senior Care family! She has an extremely giving heart and does not think twice about responding to her client's needs, whatever that may entail. We have no doubt she will continue to be a huge asset to seniors in our community.

- Felicia Buack
HomeCare Aid Director

Best wishes,
Angela DiNicola,
Founder



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FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES

Funeral Arrangements: Decisions to Make Now

No one wants to think about dying, but it's going to happen to each of us sooner or later. While approaching the topic of death and dying may be difficult for caregivers, family members as well as the elderly should try to organize and prepare for the end ahead of time, to reduce the stress, confusion and the necessity of making serious and sometimes confusing decisions regarding the care and disposition of a loved one.

A variety of checklists for seniors or their caregivers may help to organize funeral arrangements and decisions regarding funeral services, contacting relatives, selling a home, shutting off utilities, down to where lists of insurance policies and bank account information are kept, right on down to who will deliver the eulogy at the funeral service.

Pre-Death Planning Checklist

While this list is by no means all-inclusive, it should give you an idea or help guide you to determining what type of arrangements need to be made prior to the death of a loved one.

1. Prepare a phone list or address list of individuals you want to be notified in the event of a terminal illness or death.
2. Designate a trusted family member, child, or friend to serve as your executor. This person needs to have information and locations for your insurance policies, bank accounts, safety deposit boxes, and bills, so that accounts may be canceled, closed, or paid off.
3. Place a reminder in your file to contact the Social Security Administration or the Veterans Administration of the death along with any relevant Social Security or identification numbers.
4. Create a contact list of utility service providers, newspaper delivery, and postal service delivery for easy cancellation of services.
5. If your parent or loved one has pets, make arrangements ahead of time about who will take on the care of those pets.
6. Designate a Durable Power of Attorney to make health care decisions in the event your parent or yourself is unable to make rational medical decisions regarding

health care. At this time, make sure any Advance Directives or DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) documents are placed in an easy-to-access file and that a copy of such documents is/are made available to your parent's physicians.

7. As part of the funeral arrangements, ask your parent what information he or she would like provided in an obituary, or whether or not they even want one. At the same time, ask your parent to determine what type of funeral or memorial service they would prefer.

8. Purchase burial plots or make arrangements for cremation or burial ahead of time. Discuss such arrangements with your parents or with spouses.

9. Organize your finances ahead of time and make sure records are up-to-date and easily accessible to whomever is designated to take care of closing accounts or paying off balances. Documents should be together in one location and include bank details, life insurance policies, birth certificates, wills, deeds to the house, or any other pertinent information that may be necessary for the executor to close accounts, make payment disbursements, access funds and so forth.

10. Talk about any special needs or requirements of your parent in regard to their burial or cremation. Do they want their ashes scattered? Do they want to be buried in a traditional casket or in the increasingly popular "green burial" method?

Funeral Arrangements - Putting It All Together

Talking about the death of a loved one is difficult, but don't leave things to chance.

Whether or not your parent has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, it always pays to talk about such concerns ahead of time. Don't leave anything to chance.

Seniors and adult caregivers over 40 years of age should have some type of death planning arranged or at least in the discussion phase. Write it down, keep track of it, and designate someone to organize the information and put it together into an easily accessible format for family members.

<http://www.boomers-with-elderly-parents.com/funeral-arrangements.html>



ROTATING TOPIC:

The Rewards of Decluttering

There are obvious reasons to declutter. *Safety.* Clutter can trip us up. *Efficiency.* With declining eyesight, it gets hard to find things we use everyday. *Focus.* Messy environments can make it hard to process information.

Clutter is a growing problem today among all populations, and especially the elderly. To help your loved one downsize, create more room in their home and/or just make it safer to age in place, it is important to note the difference between hoarders and clutterers. Hoarders are obsessive and will often need a trained professional specializing in obsessive compulsive disorder to let go. Clutterers, the more common type, are more apt to let go with a little encouragement and support. This article deals with the latter.

Why Is It So Hard to Do?

Whether you want to pare down the stuff in your home, garage, or a storage unit, one problem is knowing where to start. The more we have, the more overwhelming it is. And for some of us the idea can be extremely anxiety-producing. A recent Yale study found that for some people, a part of our brain reacts the same way to the anticipated loss of valued possessions as it does to the idea of quitting an addiction. And there is the additional factor for the elderly of not wanting to lose a connection with the past, whether that be old school papers or a favorite jar opener you've had in the family since 1969 (most of us have at least one of these things still hanging around the house!)

Some Tips for Success

1. Get "buy in" from your loved one. Discuss the benefits for paring down, including potentially making some money from reselling your "stuff." That can be through a yard sale, consignment shop, Craig's List, or eBay. According to the New York Times, a well-planned garage sale typically nets between \$500 and \$1,000.

2. Share the process. Come up with ways to make it an enjoyable activity you share, such as reviewing old photos or school

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The Power of Touch in Elder Caregiving

When Kay Olson checked her husband, John, age 66, into Lakeview Ranch in Dassel, Minnesota, caregivers greeted both of them with a hug. They immediately helped John into the bathroom, washing him gently. He came out crying what he told Kay were "happy tears." John, who suffers from dementia, was kicked out of his previous facility for aggressive behavior. He would strike out at staff members, especially if someone tried to back him into a corner to force him to take medicine. That doesn't happen at Lakeview, where caregivers sit with residents, holding their hands or tucking them into bed at night. Since John's eyes are often closed and he rarely talks, touch "comforts him and makes him know he's not alone," Kay says. Judy Berry, founder of Lakeview Ranch, says touch is an integral component of her care. She is one of many who have seen the positive impacts of touch. A growing body of research is demonstrating the merits of this basic approach.

We're Wired to Give and Receive Touch

Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California at Berkeley, says, as a species, humans are hardwired to give and receive touch and to benefit from it. He describes how touch triggers the activation of the orbitofrontal cortex and the release of oxytocin and endorphins, the "biological platforms of social connection." He points to studies that show that massage has the same impact as the antidepressant Prozac, increasing levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin while reducing stress hormone levels.

Touch Can Reduce Symptoms of Illness

Tiffany Field, director of the Touch Research Institute in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Miami School of Medicine, says studies show that touch reduces pain, especially following strokes, and lowers blood pressure. A study she conducted evaluating the effectiveness of massage found significant decreases in Parkinson's tremors. Massage therapy also decreased pacing, wandering, and combative behavior, symptoms associated with Alzheimer's disease. Field says that many elderly patients are deprived of touch, having lost spouses, and "a lot of illnesses of the elderly may relate to their being touch deprived."

A 2012 study in *Supportive Care in Cancer* showed that cancer patients, after being given a massage by their caregivers, reported reductions in pain, stress, nausea, fatigue, anxiety, and depression. "When you reduce

stress and provide relaxation, all the symptoms are reduced," says William Collinge, an author of the study. Massages also empower caregivers by providing them with a concrete way to help their loved ones, says Collinge. He says his is the first completely online caregiver education program of its kind and allows anyone to be easily trained to give an effective massage.

How to Provide the Best Use of Touch When Caregiving

Touch can be more difficult when adult children need to parent their parents, assisting with dressing them or taking them to the bathroom. Judy Berry suggests validating emotions on both ends, saying something like, "I know this is uncomfortable for both of us, but we'll get through this together." It's important to recognize that not everybody is up for these tasks, and adult children should ask for help when it becomes insurmountable.

Ask permission. Say, "Can I give you a hug?" That gives the senior a sense

of control and doesn't violate their personal space, says Berry. Then, read their body language along the way to make sure they're enjoying the experience.

Assess the senior's nature. Some are more receptive to touch than others. Look for signs. If they recoil when you reach for their hand, don't be insistent.

Keep it simple. The act of touch need not involve a professional-caliber massage. It can be as basic as giving a hand massage with scented lotion, says Drew.

Be passive, not aggressive. Drew suggests extending your hand and letting them take it, instead of grabbing theirs. Look them in the eye. Approach them from the front instead of behind. "All of those things help to respect the other person and let them know that they're going to be encountering you," she says.

By Julie Halpert, Caring.com Contributor
<https://www.caring.com/articles/elder-caregiving-effects-of-touch>



SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

The Rewards of Decluttering *(Continued from page 2)*

papers together, or doing a "fashion show" to see what clothes to keep. Create incentives—such as an outing or meal after doing a certain amount of "work."

3. Don't try to tackle too much at once.

Help your loved one develop a strategy that addresses a room at a time, and then a single task at a time, so they are not overwhelmed. A good rule of thumb is to do no more than three hours of sorting a day, which is about how long we can sustain focus without a break.

4. Get organized. Consider preparing three bags or boxes and labeling them Keep, Toss, and Sell/Donate. You might add a fourth box for things that need repairing, mending or dry cleaning, but don't add more options than that. Put away what's in your Keep pile at the end of each day and throw out or recycle what's in your Toss pile.

5. Be decisive. When it doubt, throw it out. Organizers often use the rule of thumb that if you haven't used it/worn it/looked at it in a year, it's time for it to go. When it comes to ornamental items or keepsakes,

the other common standard is to only keep those things you really love and that give you pleasure. If that knick-knack your Aunt Marge gave you makes you cringe, it has no place in your home, regardless of the sentiment attached to it.

6. Get professional help. If the job is just too big or you need direction, consider hiring a professional organizer. They can give you an overall strategy, or guide you through the process. Do a local search for "Certified Professional Organizers," if you don't have a referral for a professional.

Going through our possessions and ridding ourselves of things that no longer fit our lives is a process we can all benefit from. You may find that going through this process with your loved one will be a positive and rewarding experience for both of you. And you may just find you are motivated to do it for yourself as well!

—By Caren Parnes
Contributor for The Senior's Choice



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

“Self-Care” with the Help of a Caregiver Support Group

Of the many challenges that family caregivers must face on a daily basis, perhaps the greatest—and least addressed—is the mental and emotional health of the caregivers themselves. Self-care is often the last thing that caregivers address, and living with stress, a sense of overwhelm, and bouts of depression seem to come with the job description. But self-care is not something to ignore. Just as a parent is instructed on the airplane to put the oxygen mask on themselves before their child, we must build self-care into our routine, not only for our own well-being, but for the ultimate benefit of those we care for.

An often overlooked resource that can provide both emotional support and useful advice for the caregiver are Caregiver Support Groups. These are community-based gatherings, sometimes run by a professional moderator, but often self-organized, that meet on an ongoing basis. Often, a support group can be a life-saver, allowing caregivers to talk to others who are experiencing the same challenges, and who can not only empathize, but offer valuable insights and suggestions. While friends are essential, it turns out that other primary caregivers who share your emotional and physical roller coaster ride may offer the best source of

support. And even on your most frazzled days, you may be a source of help to them as well.

Caregivers in support groups report these key benefits:

- Feeling less isolated by hearing stories from others in similar situations.
- Having a space to vent and safely voice frustrations.
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control.
- Learning new coping methods for stress.
- Getting practical advice on caregiving strategies.
- Improving caregiving ability.

Experts believe that these groups are one of the most effective ways for caregivers to cope with the stress that comes with caregiving. Unfortunately, seeking outside help can be a challenge for the typical caregiver, who often feels as though he or she must rely on themselves first and foremost. Family caregivers often isolate themselves—turning down coffee invitations, date nights and workouts at the gym. “There’s no time,” is the typical excuse. But the moment we surrender the notion of being “The One” who must handle it all and we ask for help, we immediately become a less stressed-out caregiver.

Those who have chosen to share the burden have found great benefits from the experience.

But to see these benefits, family caregivers first need to find a caregiver support group. That can be difficult if you don’t know where to start your search.

How to find a local caregiver support group

- Local hospitals or community centers almost always have handouts with lists of local support groups. Check there first.
- The online Enter Eldercare Locator (eldercare.gov) is a great resource to find your local Area Agency on Aging for your city. Call them to ask about local support groups, which many include general caregiver support and respite, as well as specific needs groups such as dementia care.
- If you find that there is not a support group in your community, partner with your local senior community organizations to start one up!

Every caregiver struggles with the day-to-day challenges of their role. Instead of feeling overwhelmed and isolated and suffering through the experience on your own, try a caregiver support group. It may just make your life easier.

—By Caren Parnes
Contributor for The Senior’s Choice