

Alzheimer's Assn of WNY Newsletter - Autumn 2007

Adult Daughters as Caregivers

*By Janice Goldmintz
Gerontologist*

The population in the United States, and in most other countries, is aging. We have more and more people reaching their mid 70's and up. In fact, the fastest growing group is those over 85 years old. At the same time, the birth rate is falling. This leads us to have more older adults with less people to take on the caregiver role in the family.

It is usually a daughter who takes on this caregiving role. Daughters can be the primary caregiver, or they can play a support role in helping out the spouse caregiver. Mother/daughter is thought to be the closest of intergenerational relationships (compared to father/son, mother/son or father/daughter, for example). Women are taught from early on that maintaining relationships with generations above and below them is an important aspect of their familial role, much more so than men. As the life cycle progresses, mothers and daughters may experience a deepening investment in the larger family, especially when the daughter has children of her own.

Usually, at the same time one becomes a caregiver for their mother or father, they also have children of their own that still require their own mother's attention. It becomes a balancing act

to make sure the needs of the children and the care recipient get all they need without completely depleting the caregiver! As well, women are faced with the conflict of following the traditional role of caring for their parent as their responsibility as opposed to feeling pressure to work outside the home, due to desire or necessity. All of these feelings are totally normal and expected.

Some concrete ways to relieve some of the caregiver stress are:

- Educate yourself regarding your loved one's illness
- Look for sources of help
- Set aside time for yourself, and enroll those around you to help out
- Exercise regularly
- Find a support group (The Alzheimer's Association has a Daughters Only group -- call the chapter for more information or see the support group list in this issue)
- Be alert to symptoms of depression

REFERENCES

- McCarty, Ellen F. (1996). Caring for a Parent With Alzheimer's Disease: Process of Daughter Caregiver Stress. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Vol. 23, Page 792-803.
- McGraw, Lori A., Walker, Alexis J. (2004). Negotiating Care: Ties Between Aging Mothers and Their Caregiving Daughters. *The Journals of Gerontology*, Vol. 59B, No. 6