

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Caring for Long-Distance Loved Ones

A report by the National Center for Health Statistics revealed that more than 70 million employees are currently confronting eldercare responsibilities. A major AARP survey revealed that the cost in lost productivity due to elder caregiving commitments exceeds \$11 billion each year.

Employees handling eldercare responsibilities from a distance contend with workday interruptions, acute family crises, excessive stress and frequent absenteeism. These factors may put your job at risk or cause added stress and anxiety, contributing to performance problems.

IMPACT OF DISTANCE CARE ON EMPLOYEES

Distance eldercare is an increasing concern for employees. Aging frequently includes debilitating illnesses that require specialized care. Roughly 50 percent of elders over the age of 85 develop some form of dementia, memory loss, or Alzheimer's. These age-related illnesses can impact short-term memory and physical ability. Families with aging loved ones who don't live nearby face even greater challenges. It is important you locate resources for accessing care and ensuring the well-being of loved ones without adding to your stress, concern or responsibility.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE CARE

- Talk with your loved ones frequently.
- Discuss eldercare before the need arises.
- Understand your loved one's thoughts and preferences on caregiving.
- Develop a plan of action that assigns each family member specific responsibilities.
- Make emergency contact



information easily available in the event of an emergency.

- Make sure you have important documents, including Social Security and health insurance information, wills and information about power of attorney, if needed.

COMMON MISTAKES & MISSTEPS

Well-meaning family members may inadvertently increase the stress associated with caring for elders.

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Not establishing a network of relatives or neighbors you can rely on to stop in and check

on your loved ones in an emergency

- Failing to collect important documents you may need to make health care or financial decisions from afar
- Not setting up easy access, for all concerned parties, to emergency contact information
- Allowing yourself to burn out while trying to shoulder all the responsibilities needed to care for loved ones

Caregiving can become too much for one person. When you have a network of people to help, you can support your loved ones while still caring for your own well-being.



■ LONG DISTANCE ELDERCARE DO'S

There are many steps you can take to help your loved ones, even when they are located far away

- Develop a network of people that you can rely on for support and understanding.
- Discuss all your concerns about your loved ones' care with their primary caregiver.
- Talk with your loved ones in a sensitive and caring way.
- Treat family members with the respect and dignity they deserve.
- Be honest about what you can do to help.

■ RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYEES

The UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center can help you troubleshoot problems with caregiving issues by putting you in touch with valuable resources to help ease your concerns, offer support, and help you ensure that your loved ones' needs are met. Through a partnership with Senior Care Authority, UAB employees have access to no-cost placement assistance for assisted living, independent living, and memory care, as well as discounted eldercare consulting and driver self-assessments, and more. Fees may apply for some services. Visit go.uab.edu/seniorcare to learn more.

For additional information about eldercare services throughout the nation, contact the U.S. Administration on Aging toll-free at 1-800-677-1116 or online at eldercare.gov.

— Adapted from *WorkExcel.com*