

March 2020

Church Partnerships News

Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging to present:

Tools for Caregivers: A Community Education Series

Caring for a loved one? **Tools for Caregivers** provides tips on caring for your loved one and yourself. Attend 1 or all 7 sessions.

Space is limited for this free education series

To register contact **Patty Callahan**:

Email: pcallahan@coaaa.org

Call: 614-645-7705

Thursdays March 5– April 16, 2020 from 6-7p
Mount Carmel East Hospital, Café Room A
6001 East Broad Street, Columbus, O. 43213

March 5: Accessing Resources

March 12: Planning Ahead

March 19: Navigating the Healthcare Maze

March 26: Caring for Someone in a Home or
Care Facility

April 2: Medicare for Beginners

April 9: Family Dynamics and Caregiving

April 16: Caring for a Difficult Family Member
and Preventing Burnout



Topic – Ways Congregations Can Support Caregivers

Let Mount Carmel Church Partnerships help take your health ministry to the **NEXT LEVEL!**

Monday April 20, 2020 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Siegel Center at Mount Carmel East Hospital
5975 East Broad Street. Columbus OH 43213

In this FREE workshop you will learn from local health ministries:

- How to create a lending closet in your faith community
- How to initiate conversations around end of life issues (i.e. Living Will and DPOA)
- How to start a support group
- Accessing resources to enhance effectiveness of outreach

A light dinner will be provided

To register, contact Kate Whitman by April 14, 2020 at kwhitman@mchs.com or 614-234-4389

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How to Get the Conversation Started

If you're wondering how to start a discussion with an aging parent about a sensitive topic, you're not alone. But whether you need to talk about moving, giving up driving, or bringing in help, knowing which words to use and to avoid can improve the odds of moving toward solutions.

Even if, in the past, your parent was sharing and receptive, this can change due to aging-related issues such as depression, creeping dementia, lowered self-esteem, or other frustrations. On the other hand, a close-lipped parent may be relieved to talk because he or she is worried, too.



What to say about sensitive subjects can also be tricky because you have different goals. Adult children want to solve the problem and move on. Their parents, however, want foremost to maintain a sense of control and dignity in a season marked by many losses. Your goal in how to have “the talk”: Balance both sides’ needs by moving forward slowly and with care.

Do Some Homework

Before you say a word, it is recommended to take time to collect some information and research possible solutions. Ultimately, the goal is to problem-solve together through a dialogue with your parent (not to dictate the solution or to convince through arguments). But if you gather facts first, you’ll be able to help in a way that’s better informed and less stressful for everyone. Here are a few specific topics worthy of research and planning:

- **Moving/Assisted Living**
Check out a few places on your own so you have concrete examples to talk about. Don’t think of it as being “sneaky”—it can be less anxiety-provoking for your parent if you present options.
- **In-home Care**
Closely observe what activities your parent is having trouble with. Look around the house for concrete signs he or she may not be faring well independently. Start to research sources of in-home care help and costs.
- **Driving**
Watch your parent drive, looking for signs of an unsafe driver. Research the alternate transportation services in your parent’s area or explore other ways he or she might get around if there’s no personal car.
- **Health Issues**
Observe what specific kinds of limitations you’re seeing: Trouble climbing stairs? Cooking? Managing finances? Grooming? Thinking in terms of specifics helps you figure out the best solutions.



Test the Waters

Also before you start the conversation, take time to get a sense of whether your parent is open to it. You can do this by first introducing an unthreatening related topic—by phone before a visit or, if you see your parent often, in a separate visit. This isn't yet the time for hot-button topics, criticism, or anything contentious.

Stick to the positive and general. Does he or she respond openly? Defensively? Evasively? This will give you important insight into how to proceed.

Choose the Best Messenger

What if your parent resists any talk about his or her future? Pause to consider whether this conversation is best had by another party. A neutral third party—a doctor, a family friend, a cleric—is often better suited to bring up tricky topics like driving or whether to live independently.

These people can lay the same groundwork, explaining what seems to be wrong and suggesting options for fixing it, without risking a strained relationship in the way an adult child does when a parent is especially resistant or feels manipulated.

Set the Right Tone

So you've done some homework and gotten a sense of how ready (or indifferent) your parent is. How do you take the plunge? Plan to start the conversation on a different day from your test-the-waters chat, in person if possible. This feels less threatening and overbearing, and more natural. You may be on a mission to resolve the problem, but you'll have a more ready audience if you first take the time to enjoy one another's company before diving in. Here are some suggestions:



- **Try opening with compliments** —say something like:
 - “I like how you've . . . “
 - “Wow, looks like . . . “

- **Look for an opening**

The best time to segue into a serious conversation is when your parent brings it up first and asks for your help. Failing that, look for an opportunity when everyone is relaxed. Then take the plunge. Describe what you're seeing.



Listen and Follow Your Parent's Cues

Use reflexive listening, which is an effective communication technique for difficult conversations. Rephrase what your parent says, as a way of playing back that you understand—making your parent feel supported—and then move the conversation forward.



Realize that some older adults can't articulate the real issue. They may shy from change, perhaps because they fear what it would be like or they lack the energy to deal with it. Often they avoid making a change not because of their own preferences but because they worry about upsetting someone else.

To help with resistance, focus on the solution. Or, look for the underlying cause. Some people push back for a specific unmentioned reason, which may be emotional, physical, or cognitive.

Even if there's not much choice, lay out the options and their pros and cons, strategize solutions to the biggest problems, and let your parent draw his or her own conclusion (assuming dementia is not an issue).

Let it percolate awhile

Whatever you do, don't launch an aggressive "sell" on your favorite option the minute you get back home or the next time you talk. Don't push for making a decision right away. Try not even to hint or nag at first.

Test the waters (again)

After some time passes, if your loved one *doesn't* give you an opening, you can try bringing up the issue again in a test-the-waters way.

Make It Clear That You're Comfortable with Any Decision

If your parent is of sound mind but just making decisions that you disagree with (not endangering ones), all you can do is continue the conversation in a positive way. Any choices are ultimately his or hers.

Remember that transitions involve an ongoing dialogue. Difficult as that first conversation about a sensitive topic is, it's only the first of many you're likely to have as you strategize your way toward a solution that everyone can feel better about.

For more information, check out these resources:

<https://www.caregiver.org/caregiving>

<http://www.coaaa.org/cms/services/caregiver>



Congregational Happenings

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church - Go Red for Women



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Mount Carmel Mission

We serve together in the Spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

Congregational Partners

Faith communities (including congregations with a Church Partnerships Advisory Board member*) that partner with Mount Carmel to improve the health of our communities by having active health ministry teams that assess and address the holistic health needs of their congregation:

Advent United Church of Christ
Christ Memorial Missionary Baptist Church
City of Zion Church
Faith Community Church of God
First Presbyterian Church, Westerville
Good Shepherd Baptist Church
Hilltop Comm. Worship Center SDA
* Mifflin Presbyterian Church
Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist Church
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
St. Augustine and Gabriel Catholic Church
St. Mary Queen of Missions Catholic Church
St. Peter Catholic Church
Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
Vineyard Christian Fellowship – Grove City

Briggs Road Baptist Church
Christ United Methodist Church
Corpus Christi Catholic Church
First Church of God
* Fruit of the Spirit Seventh Day Adventist
Harlem Road United Methodist Church
Love Zion Baptist Church
Mount Hermon Baptist Church
New Birth Christian Ministry
Resurrection Missionary Baptist Church
St. John Neumann Catholic Church, Sunbury
* St. Paul A.M.E. Church, Columbus
* Stonybrook United Methodist Church
United Methodist Church for All People *

