

Call **888-741-5172** for Home Instead Senior Care services in your area.

Home > Caregiving Topics > Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease > Tips on Caring for Elders with Alzheimer's or Dementia >

How to Deal with Family Conflict Caused by Alzheimer's



Only when families work together as a team can their loved ones with Alzheimer's receive the best love and care possible.

February 6, 2012

Shortly after her father passed away, Valerie's mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

"When it became apparent that there was something wrong with my mother, my brother told me, 'I'm sorry, but I'm done with her.'

I don't know what happened between them, but he was true to his word. He was really scarce with his visits. I guess since I am her caregiver, I'm out too. He has no contact with me. I am really alone in this endeavor to take care of Mom. Alzheimer's has broken up my family."

Sadly, an ill loved one is the number one trigger for family conflict, according to a study conducted

by the Home Instead Senior Care® network. Coping with the reality of a loved one's Alzheimer's not only has its emotional difficulties, but logistical ones as well, especially in terms of decision-making and bearing the responsibility of caregiving. Despite these challenges, the following tips may help you unite your family around your loved one with Alzheimer's when that person needs family support the most.

- **Communicate Regularly.** Don't allow weeks to turn into months and years of not communicating with family members you feel should take a vested interest in your parents' condition and care. If you've fallen out of touch with a member of your family, reach out through a phone call, email, card or letter.
- **Empathize.** Difficult situations affect everyone differently, so try to understand your sibling's point of view before getting angry or upset. Approaching the issue this way will help you suggest an appropriate solution. Maybe your brother can't emotionally deal with Mom "losing her mind." If that's the case, maybe he can help you by contributing financially to her care instead. Empathy was one main factor that helped keep the Hamilton sisters united. The stress of their mother's illness affected every person in the family differently, but as you'll learn from their family's story, they persevered through the challenges to provide the loving care they felt their mother deserved.
- **Ask for Help.** If you feel over-burdened by the responsibility of caregiving, inform the rest of your family (without complaining or blaming others). Your sibling(s) may assume you're doing just fine handling everything on your own unless you tell them what challenges you're facing and specific ways they can help. As the maxim goes, "a burden shared is a burden halved."
- **Make Decisions Together.** Even if you serve as the primary caregiver of your parents, involve your sibling(s) when you need to make a major care decision. Maybe you feel Dad's Alzheimer's has progressed to a point where he needs additional assistance, and you're looking into hiring a professional in-home caregiver for him. Talk through the pros, cons, financial considerations and possible alternatives with your siblings before you make a decision. Taking their thoughts and opinions into account will help to eliminate any hard feelings, grudges or resentments.
- **Leave Childhood Rivalries Behind.** Easier said than done, of course, but try to approach the issue as the adult you are now, not as the younger person your siblings may still see you as. Stepping back and realizing how unresolved issues from long ago influence your present relationships may put a helpful new perspective on your current situation.
- **Enlist the Help of a Mediator.** Sometimes family issues become too complicated or emotionally charged to solve on your own. A third-party resource, particularly a professional such as a counselor, mediator or even a doctor or geriatric care manager, can provide an impartial voice of reason.

Only when families work together as a team can their loved ones with Alzheimer's receive the best love and care possible. Remember that regardless of your past history or current situation, all relationships are a work-in-progress. Envisioning how efforts to make amends will ultimately benefit everyone and can help steer you and your family members on a path toward reconciliation.

For additional support managing family relationships and resolving family conflict, explore the resources in our 50-50 Rule® program.



The more you know, the better
your loved one's care will be.

▶ **Free Online Training & Expert Tips**

at HelpForAlzheimersFamilies.com

Get helpful tips and articles like these delivered to your email.

Tags: Alzheimers, Dementia, elder care stress, family conflict, in home health care, mediator

©2017 Home Instead, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

<https://www.caregiverstress.com/dementia-alzheimers-disease/elder-care/family-conflict-caused-by-alzheimers/>